

**Caught between Islam and the West:  
secularism in the Kemalist discourse**

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CAUGHT BETWEEN ISLAM AND THE WEST:  
SECULARISM IN THE KEMALIST DISCOURSE

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PhD

2011

Dedicated to my mother, Nermin Çarmıklı,  
and my sister, Gaye Çarmıklı

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## Abstract

This thesis identifies the defining signifiers for the Kemalist discourse as the West and Islam. Kemalism mainly related to the West through the hegemonic discourse of Orientalism, and the Kemalist attitude towards Islam was characterised by its peculiar brand of secularism. Orientalism portrayed the East as irrational in all aspects of the economic, political and social realms. In contrast the West was rational, enlightened, scientific, determined to keep its destiny at its hands, hardworking, honest, and efficient... There was an essential difference between the two realms, which prevented the East to progress. The numerous aspects of the West-East dichotomy are investigated in detail by utilising a number of Western sources including newspaper stories, travel accounts, and diplomatic correspondence and a plethora of Kemalist texts. The documentary analysis in the thesis is based on original research. The Orientalist view even prescribed a recipe for Turkey's progress, and Kemalism is defined in the thesis as a discourse which argues that Turkey must adopt Western civilization in its totality, including music, dress, alphabet, etc, and completely erase its past as symbolized by Islam.

The Kemalist reform agenda amounted to a utopia, to transform Turkey in such a radical manner that Turkey would *appear* indistinguishable from the West, in its script, dress, music, political organisation, etc. However, this meant a total re-activation of the 'the social' in Turkey and everything becoming part of 'the political.' But then, Kemalism never acknowledged the antagonistic and conflictual nature of the political. The relationship between 'Kemalism and Orientalism' and that between 'Kemalism and secularism' have been studied by various authors, however the originality of this work lies in its emphasis on the relationship between 'the social' and the political,' and its careful analysis on the total re-activation of the social through the Kemalist reforms.

In its ambitious project, Kemalism regarded Islam, which represented the Ottoman Turkish tradition, as the 'main problem' with the potential to nurture formidable opposition. Hence, Kemalist secularism was first and foremost an attack against Islam. Secularism, supported by a strong belief on the power of science and rationality to organise human life, and a strong aversion towards the religious and the traditional, was the central pillar of Kemalism. The thesis shows how Kemalism was caught between Islam and the West, and argues that secularism is the most important aspect of Kemalism, because Kemalism is an 'Orientalism from within.'

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I am deeply grateful to my supervisor Prof. Chantal Mouffe whose uncompromising insistence on theoretical clarity and academic excellence throughout the research at all stages had led me to doubt whether I would be able to meet her strict standards. But I'm sure that without her determined guidance this thesis would have been much weaker and less coherent. However, I would like to stress that all the shortcomings of this thesis squarely rest on my shoulders.

There are many academics I owe thanks. Prof. Hasan Ünal from Gazi University in Ankara has been a most reliable guide whenever I had questions about the Ottoman and Turkish historiography. Dr. Ahmet Özcan's extensive knowledge of books and journals in Turkish was invaluable in locating the Turkish sources. I am also much indebted to Prof. Ernesto Laclau, with whom I have had the honour to discuss Kemalism within the light of his work on populism. Many thanks also to Bob O'Hara and his staff for helping me locate archival material at the British National Archives. In Ankara I would like to thank Kürşad Akpınar for his assistance in the newspaper research and for the countless fruitful discussions we held on Turkey and Kemalism.

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## Introduction

This thesis will look at the central role Kemalism has played and continues to play in the modernization of Turkey, which has been going on since the *Tanzimat* period in the nineteenth century Ottoman Empire. Regardless of whether one takes a largely approving or critical attitude, Atatürk is bound to be the major character and Kemalism the major ideological strain or discourse in any treatment on the history and politics of modern Turkey. They have such a large presence in the political sphere and there are so many wildly different understandings about them that one commentator was led to the conclusion ‘Kemalism is everything but nothing at the same time,’<sup>1</sup> while another made the question *But Which Atatürk?*, as the title of his recent book.<sup>2</sup>

Yet, in all this ambiguity and confusion, we can make two observations that may hold the key for a proper understanding of Kemalism. The first observation highlights the enduring importance of secularism for Kemalism and the peculiar understanding attached to that concept in Kemalism. From the outset, Kemalism understands that its secularism *must* be different than either the French laicism or the Anglo-Saxon secularism, because the religion it confronts is not Christianity (Catholic or Protestant) but Islam. Furthermore, Islam does not present itself as an institutional religion with a Church, which would help delineate its boundaries. In other words, the position of Islam in the social and political spheres in Turkey is rather different than that of Christianity in the West, where secularism had originated. Hence for Kemalism, Islam represents more than just a religion, and becomes the general signifier for the ‘old order,’ or the Ottoman Turkish tradition, which is considered as the prime culprit that kept Turkey backward. Islam becomes the ‘central problem’ that Kemalism must confront. Hence, Kemalist secularism is not just a separation of religion and politics, and non-interference of the either party on the affairs of the other. It involves a strict control over Islam at the very least, and a large-scale attack against the ‘superstitious, backward, irrational, ignorant, etc’ elements in Islam.

The second observation is that Kemalism’s relationship with the West, the place accorded to the West in the Kemalist discourse, or the way Kemalism approaches the West, are deeply problematic. When we have a general look at Turkish modernization, a central debate has been on the distinction between culture and civilization. Although there was broad consensus on the need to adopt scientific methods of the West in the military, economics, and administration,

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<sup>1</sup> Yeğen, M. (2001) “Kemalizm ve Hegemonya?” in *Modern Türkiye’de Siyasal Düşünce, Cilt 2, Kemalizm*, İstanbul: İletişim Yay., pp. 56-74.

<sup>2</sup> Akyol, T. (2008) *Ama Hangi Atatürk?*, İstanbul: Doğan Yay.

when it came to the social sphere, many argued that 'we need to preserve our culture, our lifestyle, and our religion.' In this debate, Kemalism rejected a distinction between culture and civilization, and even refused the existence of many civilizations existing side by side in the world. For Kemalism, there was one civilization, it was universal and international, and in our age, it happened that this universal civilization was most advanced in the West. Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to consider Kemalists as nothing but agents of the West, because there was also another element in Kemalism, which claimed that the West would prefer Turkey to remain in a backward state, and even declared that 'Westernism is [a call to keep the country] backward' (*'Batıcılık Gericiliktir'*).

Why does secularism play such a central role in Kemalism? Why does Kemalism take such a hostile attitude towards religion, that is, Islam? These are the questions I seek to answer in this work. My main argument is that secularism is the most important aspect of Kemalism, because (i) Kemalism finds the main fault for Turkey's backwardness in Islam and the Ottoman worldview, (ii) Kemalism looks up to the West as the universal standard of modernity and assumes that Islam and the Ottoman Turkish tradition are the barriers towards progress, and (iii) the lack of (as well as disregard for) democratic legitimization forces Kemalism to legitimise itself only through its original point of rebellion against the Ottoman government in Istanbul as well as its general rebellion against the Ottoman order.

### *Atatürk and Kemalism at the Centre*

In the period 1905-1919, Mustafa Kemal has a minor role in the events, as a marginal member of the Young Turk movement and the Committee of the Union and Progress (CUP), he appears in a few theatres of war, most notably at Gallipoli, but he is hardly among the top Ottoman generals during World War I. In fact, it was precisely the fact that he had not been discredited in the disastrous political and military campaigns of the Young Turk party that increased his chances of leading the national resistance movement in 1919. From then onwards, though, he quickly becomes the major character and with the victory against the Greeks in 1922, he acquires an enormous prestige, which he uses extremely well to become the saviour of the homeland, the *Gazi-warrior*, the founder of the republic and its first president, the 'eternal chief,' (*Ebedi Şef*), the 'Great Leader' (*Ulu Önder*), and finally, the father of the Turks, that is, *Atatürk*.

The image of Atatürk has been so strong in Turkey that he has become an icon, a larger than life figure, a super-human, an exalted figure, a god-like creature. There are ample grounds to argue that reverence of Atatürk has become a modern religion. His mausoleum (*Anıtkabir*) in Ankara is a holy pilgrimage site, visited by hundreds of thousands of hard-liner Kemalists, to seek inspiration

from his spiritual presence, to ask for guidance, and as a show of strength. High ranking government officials visit the mausoleum en masse on national days in the morning and sign the visitor's book, always addressing Atatürk in first person, as if he is still alive. When high judges, university professors, or intellectuals, who consider themselves as the heirs to Atatürk's legacy, would like to criticize the government, which is usually from the right and seen as not sincerely and sufficiently Kemalist, they gather, don their official and academic robes, and visit Atatürk's mausoleum, to 'complain' to Atatürk!

In similar fashion, the term Kemalist was first used in the French and British press in the period 1919-1922 to describe those loyal to Mustafa Kemal in Ankara. The term Kemalism as an ideology, however, did not appear until 1929-30. In 1930s, several competing attempts were made to form an ideological framework for Kemalism, but ultimately, a flexible formulation in what came to be known as the 'six arrows' or 'the six principles of Atatürk' was adopted in the official program of the Republican People's Party (RPP). These principles came to be associated with Kemalism, or Atatürkism, and the reforms carried out in 1920s and 1930s, came to be known as 'Atatürk's reforms.' In 1950s, a law was enacted, which declared 'insulting or desecrating the spiritual legacy of Atatürk' a punishable crime. From then onwards, this law was used to prevent any criticism or any objective evaluation of Atatürk, his reforms, or Kemalism. The 1961 constitution enshrined Kemalism and Atatürk's reforms amongst the articles of constitution which cannot be amended. But it was more than that: even proposals to amend these articles in the constitution were forbidden.

Today, the principles and reforms of Atatürk are still protected in the constitution, alongside the articles that describe the Turkish state as a secular, democratic republic with the supremacy of the rule of law. The oath that the MPs are required to take at the parliament before beginning their work includes a pledge of allegiance to the principles and reforms of Atatürk. Every morning, schoolchildren at primary schools throughout Turkey recite a pledge, 'O Atatürk, who gave us our present day as a gift! I swear that I am going to walk down the path you have opened, towards the target you have pointed us for.'

### *Kemalism as a Totalitarian or Authoritarian Ideology?*

When we look at the Kemalist policies of 1930s, we could conclude that Kemalism was an authoritarian or even totalitarian ideology.<sup>3</sup> However, compared to other totalitarian ideologies of the period, such as Nazism in Germany, or Stalinism in Soviet Union, Kemalism has not been discredited after the end of the one-party rule in Turkey in 1950. Today, Kemalism remains the

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<sup>3</sup> Kahraman, H.B. (2010) "Heykelcikler, kitaplar ve bahar" *Sabah*, 15 February 2010.

official ideology of the Turkish Republic. Atatürk is still revered as the saviour and founder of modern Turkey. Although the Kemalist party, RPP (Republican People's Party), has not been able to win a single election ever since, through the successive military interventions, Kemalism still exerts an influence on the Turkish political landscape. Every 10 November, on the anniversary of Atatürk's death, and on national days, tens of thousands of Turks flock to Atatürk's mausoleum in Ankara, called 'The Monument-Tomb' (*Anıtkabir*), and pledge their allegiance to Kemalism.

The difficulty of 'containing' the heyday of Kemalism to the lifetime of Mustafa Kemal, or to the period RPP's one-party rule is readily manifested in the example of Democrat Party (DP). The election victory of DP on 14 May 1950, under the slogan, 'Enough! The word belongs to the Nation!' could well be considered as the end of Kemalism, as for example, Ernesto Laclau seems to do when he declares that 'the neo-populism of Adnan Menderes' had 'little to do with Atatürk's six arrows.'<sup>4</sup> Yet, Democrat Party worked very hard to dispel any doubts regarding their Kemalist credentials. The famous 'Law on crimes committed against Atatürk,' which made 'insulting the spiritual personality of Atatürk' a crime punishable with prison terms, was passed by DP in 1951. After DP came to power, all resources were mobilised to complete the monumental construction of Atatürk's mausoleum, which had been lingering for years, and it was finally completed in 1953. 15 years after his death, Atatürk was finally laid to rest in his tomb with a majestic ceremony, which symbolised DP's commitment to Kemalism and to the legacy of Atatürk. Finally, it was Celal Bayar, who famously declared 'O Atatürk! Loving you is a national supplication!' Celal Bayar had been the leader of DP alongside Adnan Menderes in the run-up to the 1950 elections, and he was then elected as the third president after DP's election victory. In any case, the founders of DP had been in the RPP before their breakup in 1946, and Celal Bayar had served as prime minister more than once during Mustafa Kemal's lifetime. It is true that the political orientation of DP was decidedly different than that of RPP, but this does not make it anti-Kemalist.

Hence, throughout the thesis I try to stay away from delineating the boundaries of Kemalism by keeping certain individuals, groups, and parties in, and leaving certain others out. I also do not describe Kemalism simply as a totalitarian ideology, which enables me to look beyond the one-party rule of RPP, as well as identifying elements of Kemalist discourse existing even among those who the hard-core Kemalists consider as their anti-thesis.

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<sup>4</sup> Laclau, E. (2005) *On Populist Reason*, London and New York: Verso, p. 214.

I must also stress that in this thesis, I do not treat Kemalism as a specific political movement, whose cadres and ideology can easily be pinpointed. I rather try to understand Kemalism as a discourse, which is 'not restricted to speech and writing but embraces all systems of signification. It is in this sense coterminous with social life.'<sup>5</sup> When I refer to discourses, I try to subscribe to Laclau and Mouffe's definition that they are 'structured totalities articulating both linguistic and non-linguistic elements. From this point of view, the distinction between a movement and its ideology is not only hopeless, but also irrelevant – what matters is the determination of the discursive sequence through which a social force or movement carries out its overall political performance.'<sup>6</sup>

This is partly due to the particularities of the Turkish political landscape, which makes it very difficult for a political movement to openly criticize Atatürk and Kemalism. But it is also due to the fact that elements of the Kemalist discourse, thanks to their intricate relationship with the discourse of modernization, may be found in places that may ostensibly be considered as being anti-Kemalist. For these reasons, I have been trying to stay focused on the discursive elements rather than their particular manifestations.

#### *Naming the Great Leader: Mustafa Kemal, Paşa, Gazi, or Atatürk?*

As I discuss in Chapter Four in great detail, Mustafa Kemal used different names in different periods, and these names were all chosen for legitimation strategies specific to the period under consideration. Hence whether one calls Mustafa Kemal as Gazi, Mustafa Kemal Paşa, or Atatürk is not arbitrary and has significance. Throughout the thesis, I have adopted Mustafa Kemal over two other possible alternatives used in the literature, Atatürk and Mustafa Kemal Paşa for a variety of reasons. Firstly, calling him as Atatürk would mean giving up a degree of objectivity, because Atatürk, meaning 'Father of the Turks,' is a value-laden statement, and presupposes an approval of what he did and stood for. Secondly, Mustafa Kemal took Atatürk as a surname only in 1934, and it would be an anachronism to call him as Atatürk in the preceding period. (Technically, the Turkish parliament 'gave' him this surname, but since he was the undisputed leader and a dictator at that time, we should recognize Mustafa Kemal himself as the real subject who *gave* himself this surname.) Likewise, Mustafa Kemal was not a Paşa in the periods 1919-1921 and 1927-1934, so calling him as Mustafa Kemal Paşa for the entire timeframe is not historically

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<sup>5</sup> Laclau, E. (2006) "Ideology and Post-Marxism," *Journal of Political Ideologies*, vol. 2, no. 11, p. 106.

<sup>6</sup> Laclau, E. (2005) *On Populist Reason*, New York and London: Verso, p. 13. Laclau, E. and C. Mouffe (1985) *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*, Chapter Three, London and New York: Verso, pp. 93-148.

accurate. In any case, one of Atatürk's reforms specifically forbade the use of such honorary titles as Ağa, Bey, and Paşa, no doubt inspired by the French Revolution's abolition of aristocratic privileges and equalising everyone as *citoyen* (citizen) of the Republic. Therefore, I will call him as Mustafa Kemal throughout the thesis in the name of consistency, historical accuracy, and objectivity.

### *Censorship and Distortions in the Official History as an Impediment*

There exists a significant difficulty before one can engage in a theoretical analysis of Kemalism. Compared to, say, history of western European countries, or the history of the fall of the Russian Tsardom and the Bolshevik Revolution, the history of the end of the Ottoman Empire and the establishment of the Turkish Republic is much more in shadow. Due to the wealth of sensitive topics, many events are still shrouded in mystery, and sharply differing interpretations are hotly contested. Many archival documents are inaccessible, especially those related to Mustafa Kemal's political activities and his reforms. Some of his archives are locked at the Presidential Palace, and some are at the headquarters of the Chief of General Staff of the Turkish Armed Forces, not open to public.

Mustafa Kemal's famous *Nutuk* (Grand Speech) provides a clear example to the censorship and distortions of the official historiography. As noted by Zürcher, Mustafa Kemal gave this speech shortly after the remnant CUP leaders were either executed or forced to political oblivion under the pretext of the attempted suicide against Mustafa Kemal's life at the Independence Tribunal's special trials. Hence, it was first and foremost the story of this intense political polemic told from the perspective of Mustafa Kemal, yet it had been taken as a reliable historical source by both the Turkish and western scholars.<sup>7</sup> As such, it includes some deliberate omissions and distortions. For example, when Mustafa Kemal cites the articles of resolution adopted at the Erzurum Congress in July 1919, he includes, 'No mandate or protection can be acceptable.' The actual resolution not only contains such a statement, it includes an article that can only be interpreted as being ready to negotiate a mandate or protection of a great power over Turkey.<sup>8</sup>

The story of *Nutuk* does not end at this point. Shortly after its publication, the alphabet reform was initiated in 1928 and the Turkish language was transformed in a 'language reform' during 1930s, which has been called a 'catastrophic success.' As a result of these reforms in the script and language, the original *Nutuk* soon became inaccessible to the public. Hence, a 'translation' of

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<sup>7</sup> Zürcher, E.J. (1984) *The Unionist Factor: The Role of the Committee of Union and Progress in the Turkish National Movement 1905-1926*, Leiden: Brill, pp. 26-30, 143-149; Zürcher, E.J. (2003) *Milli Mücadelede İttihatçılık*, İstanbul: İletişim Yay., pp. 48-58; 241-244.

<sup>8</sup> Akyol, T. (2008) *Ama Hangi Atatürk*, p. 63.



*Nutuk* from its rich Ottoman Turkish language and style into the ‘pure’ and ‘purified’ Turkish of the post-language reform era had to be carried out. As historian Hakan Erdem has lucidly told in a recent critique of Turkish scholarship, the translated version, called *Söylev*, found the temerity to cut off nearly one third of the original text of *Nutuk*, while introducing serious distortions to the remainder.<sup>9</sup> Hence, even Mustafa Kemal himself could not escape the censoring axe of the later Kemalists!

Throughout the thesis, I refer to several instances of Kemalist censorship and distortion. In Chapter One, I state that the depiction of Ottoman sultans as ‘Oriental Despots’ in the Kemalist discourse does not stand historical scrutiny and it is an ideological attack against the Ottoman past. In Chapter Two, I talk about the minimization of the importance of WWI in favour of the national liberation war as a Kemalist attempt to introduce a rupture. Mustafa Kemal’s role at the Gallipoli campaign in 1915 is over-emphasized for legitimacy purposes. In Chapter Two, I refer to accusations of supporting the reactionary movements (*irtica*) for the Progressive Republican Party as a standard Kemalist charge to antagonise opposition. In Chapter Three, the outright omission of Mustafa Kemal’s appeals to religious sensibilities in the early stages of the liberation war appears as an aspect of making Islam the central problem of Kemalism. The Kemalist narrative strongly emphasises the “death fetva” of the şeyhülislam in Istanbul in April 1920, in an attempt to portray the whole religious scholar class (*ulema*) as traitors, but then it ignores the counter-fetva signed by Rifat Börekçi, the mufti of Ankara and a further 150 religious scholars, in support of the national cause.

## **The Main Argument of the Thesis and How It Relates to the Arguments Made throughout the Chapters**

My main argument in this thesis is that secularism is the most important aspect of Kemalism, because Kemalism is an ‘Orientalism from within.’ All the other arguments I make, and all the examples I give throughout the thesis serve to underline this main argument. I shall list the other important arguments I make throughout the thesis, while showing in detail how they relate to my main argument.

### **1. Orientalism**

The dominant attitude that developed in the West towards the Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth century was Orientalism, which posited an impregnable barrier between the West and the East. Orientalism portrayed the East, in our case meaning the Ottoman Turkey, as irrational,

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<sup>9</sup> Erdem, H. (2008) *Tarih-Lenk*, İstanbul: Doğan.

ignorant, superstitious, fanatical, barbarous, backward, traditional, fatalistic, lazy, corrupt, inefficient, and ruled by an 'Oriental Despot.' This description of the East was in sharp contrast with that of the West, which was rational, enlightened, scientific, sensible, civilized, progressive, modern, determined to keep its destiny at its hands, hardworking, honest, efficient, and a place where the rule of law reigned supreme.

I develop my ideas on the relationship between Kemalism and Orientalism chiefly in Chapter One, and to some extent, in Chapter Two. I explain how my understanding of Orientalism differs from that of Edward Said. I would like to emphasize that I do not imply in any way that Kemalists were simply agents or 'puppets' of the West, or the Orientalists. This is the reason why I insist on using the term 'Orientalism from within' for Kemalism, rather than simply asserting that 'Kemalism was Orientalism.' Furthermore, Kemalism was not simply a westernism. I shall argue below that Kemalism's relationship with Orientalism prevents it from coming to terms with the West, and causes it to approach the West in a problematic way. This relationship also prevents Kemalism from appreciating the western political thought in its fullness.

In general, my treatment of the relationship between Kemalism and Orientalism is contained in the 'Orientalism from within' formulation of my main argument.

## **2. Islam as Barrier in the Orientalist Discourse**

In the Orientalist discourse, Islam came to be the general signifier of all that was wrong in the East. Islam was seen as 'barrier towards progress.' Hence, the Orientalist discourse maintained that in order to develop and progress, the East must get rid of Islam.

This argument is essential in my understanding of Kemalism, because it will help me in constructing my main argument that secularism (as understood in its peculiar way) is the most important element of Kemalism, because it was Orientalism, which first regarded Islam as barrier towards progress.

## **3. Kemalism as 'Orientalism from within'**

The Orientalist discourse was deeply influential on the Turks, and there was broad support for modernization-even the Islamists in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Turkey were by and large modernizers. However, many reformers made a distinction between culture and civilization, and called for restricting modernization to 'technical' or technological aspects of the west, while keeping the Turkish culture and lifestyle intact. In contrast, Kemalists regarded the western civilization as universal and wanted to adopt it as a whole.

I find this point so important that I have made it as the basis of my definition for Kemalism, which I take to be the general signifier of the idea that Turkey must adopt the western civilization in its totality, including the western culture, music, dressing, alphabet, etc, and that Turkey must get rid of its past, symbolized by Islam, completely.

#### **4. Kemalism's Ultimate Aim as an Utopia or Fantasy**

Under the section titled 'Kemalism: Rupture or Continuity? Reform or Revolution?' in Chapter Two, I discuss the Kemalist project in all its boundless ambition. Kemalism was so spellbound by the achievements of the western science and technology, and by the allure of the changes modernity brought in, that it truly believed that it could dispense with the Ottoman Turkish tradition and culture, and create a brand new, modern Turkey with no connections at all to the past. Some might confuse the Kemalist project as an attempt to establish hegemony in the discourse theory sense of the word, but it was not, because even in a hegemonic project there is scope for contingency and the existence of opposing formations (or discourses) are not altogether ruled out. We can now identify the ultimate aim of Kemalism, that is, the creation of a new Turkey that 'resembled' the West on surface with no relationship whatsoever to its past, as an utopia, as pure fantasy, because firstly it was an impossible task and secondly it was an incomplete vision: the Kemalists were enamoured by the 'appearance' of the West, but they were never prepared to accept the full implications of installing a western political system, such as civil liberties, opposition, free elections, individuality, etc.

The relationship between the social and the political that I discuss in the conclusion is directly related to this point. I understand the political as the terrain of conflict and power struggle, and the social as the sedimented practices whose political origin might be obscured but nevertheless always present. I argue that the Kemalist project ultimately boils down to importing 'the social' as it was in the West wholesale to Turkey, without regard to its intricate relationship with 'the political' as it had existed in the West. Notwithstanding the fact that replacing the social in Turkey with the social in the West was bound to be an impossible task, I argue that Kemalism's failure lied in its refusal to accept the political origins of each and every element in the social, and the relationship between the social and the political. In hindsight, Kemalism appears to be extremely naïve in thinking that the social could be stripped off the inherently political dimension through the originary acts of its institution.

In Perry Anderson's words, 'But systematic though it was, the transformation that now gripped Turkey was a strange one: a cultural revolution without a social revolution, something historically very rare, indeed that might look a priori impossible. The structure of society, the rules of

property, the pattern of class relations, remained unaltered.’<sup>10</sup> In the terminology I have adopted, what Anderson calls as ‘cultural’ is simply ‘the social,’ while what he calls as ‘social’ is actually ‘the political.’

## 5. ‘Liberty vs Justice’ as Kemalism vs the Ottoman Turkish Tradition

I provide an illustration of how Kemalism attempted to change the ‘political language’ in Turkey in Chapter Two under the section titled ‘Liberty vs Justice as the Foundations of a Political Discourse.’ There I argue that justice had been the key political concept in the Ottoman Turkish tradition but from the Young Ottomans (especially the likes of Namik Kemal, Ali Suavi, Şinasi etc) onwards, the Turkish modernizers increasingly saw ‘liberty’ as the key political concept that Turkey needed. They called for a constitution (*Kanun-ı Esasi*) to be accepted, a parliament to be opened, and the powers of the Ottoman monarch to be restrained in a rule of law. Later, under the reign of Abdülhamid II, these concepts would become the rallying point of opposition and the central tenets of the Young Turks. Yet, I argue in Chapter Two that the rhetoric of liberty in Turkey, more specifically in Kemalism since the Young Turks, was rather superficial, that it has not taken root, and that the traditional Ottoman Turkish political understanding, centred around the concept of justice have prevailed. I take this as an important sign that Kemalism’s westernization drive was superficial, and it certainly did not succeed.

In contrasting the two competing political languages, one based on justice and the other based on liberty, I consider how different people and groups treated Abdülhamid II. For the Young Turks and all those who had worked towards the declaration of the second constitution in 1908, Abdülhamid II was a tyrant, as the epitome of ‘Oriental Despot,’ who acted solely on his whim and for his interest, and who knew no bounds and rules. That approach was then taken up by the Kemalists. But I argue that from 1940s onwards, a completely opposite view towards Abdülhamid II developed, which regarded him as a ‘just ruler.’ I argue that these two contrasting views of Abdülhamid perfectly reflect the struggle between two political languages, the former based on liberty and the latter based on justice. I argue that the inability of Kemalism to make people agree with its harsh criticism of Abdülhamid II as Kemalism’s failure in its campaign against Islam and tradition.

On a more general scale, I argue in Chapter Two that especially after Turkey moved to the multiparty regime, the traditional political language, based on justice, was largely reinstated. I illustrate this point by giving examples from Justice Party of Demirel and the the current Justice and Development (AK) Party. Again, I take this as a sign of failure for the Kemalist utopia.

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<sup>10</sup> Anderson, P. (2008) “Kemalism,” *The London Review of Books*.

The detailed analysis on the political languages, based on justice or liberty, shows that the Kemalist project was not simply a matter of a few reforms or even a regime change. It was much more than that, it was an attempt to completely destroy whatever had belonged to the past and create a brand new Turkey with no connections to its past. It was for this reason that Kemalism was so radical, so uncompromising and these terms aptly describe the secularism of Kemalism. Hence, this argument highlights the importance of secularism in Kemalism as a struggle against Islam, which represented tradition, and it is thus related to my main argument in this way.

## **6. Contemporary as Modern: Kemalism's Obsession with the Modern**

The idea of progress and development as being inherently good and desirable had been part of the Turkish modernization since the Tanzimat era, but with the Young Turks onwards it became a defining feature of Kemalism. I devote a significant part of Chapter Two to discuss Kemalism's obsession with the pace of change modernity has brought about. This firstly helps us appreciate Kemalism's impatience. When the whole world is rapidly advancing towards ever greater progressive ideals, stopping for a while even to consider certain harmful aspects of change is a waste of time for Kemalism. This is why Kemalists get quite angry when they are faced with any criticism or opposition. The relentless march towards progress is so important for Kemalism that it is used as a blanket excuse when blunders are made in the haste to demolish the past and install the new.

In Chapter Two, I analyse the Kemalist motto 'catching up with the level of modern civilization' very carefully. The ultimate purpose of Kemalism was set as taking Turkey up to 'the level of modern civilization.' This was implicit recognition that Turkey was at that time below that level but that was not the whole story. Since modern civilization was defined with reference to the European example, the level was at the same time an *external* condition. I argue that 'the level of modern civilization' is constructed in Kemalism in such a way that it acts as a horizon or limit that shall never be reached. In a sense, it was a moving target-one that kept on changing in its own course.

On the face of it, Kemalism appears as a 'temporary' ideology or discourse, which shall no longer be needed once Turkey reaches the level of modern civilization. Yet, with the transformation of Kemalism as the ideology of the bureaucratic-military elite that legitimated their guardianship over the Turkish society, the level became a convenient tool to preserve the status quo with the pretension that Kemalism was an 'ongoing revolution.' The level of modern civilization is of course represented by the West. But looking closely, we see that Kemalism will never conclude Turkey *has* reached that level. The 'level of modern civilization' becomes the limit of the discursive horizon of Kemalism.

## 7. Double Discourse of Kemalism in Adopting Western Political Concepts

One of the ideas I keep returning to again and again throughout the thesis is the universalist and the particularist aspects of Kemalism. On the one hand, Kemalism considers civilization to be universal and the result of the humanity's millennial march of progress towards a better future. Since in our age civilization finds its most developed expression in the West, the ways of the west must be adopted. Kemalism subscribes to this as a general idea, but then, when it comes to working out the details, Kemalism begins to point out the particular conditions of Turkey, citing them as reasons for not adopting certain western political practices, such as civil liberties, including freedom of speech and religious freedom, respecting the results of free elections, existence of opposition, free press, etc. The sensitive geopolitical condition of the country and the fact that Islam's role in Turkey as a barrier towards progress is much more entrenched than, say, the role Christianity had played for Europe, the prevalence of superstition and ignorance among the populace are some of the most frequently cited particular conditions of Turkey.

In Chapters Two and Four, I argue that there is a double discourse running throughout Kemalism with respect to these concepts. For instance, in principle Kemalism accepts the need for the existence of opposing ideas in society and politics, and for the need to be open to criticism. I say *in principle*, because that is the way society and politics function in the West. In 1930, the primary motivation that led Mustafa Kemal to encourage some of his friends to establish the Free Party was precisely the fact that Turkey was being criticized in Europe for having turned into a *dictature* (Mustafa Kemal's own words). Hence, Free Party was permitted to give the *appearance* that there was an opposition in Turkey, and Turkey was like other western democracies. Nevertheless, the Free Party was unexpectedly met with huge public enthusiasm and it soon became clear that the existing grievances in the country, which had increased considerably in the aftermath of the 1929 world economic crisis, would be channeled through the Free Party. Thus, the Free Party was quickly transformed from a puppet opposition to a real opposition party with a potential to overthrow the Republican People Party in the elections. Under such circumstances, the Free Party 'experiment' was quickly called off in just three months. In Chapter Two, I study the Free Party case and several other cases and argue that it is not just this or that opposition party, this or that criticism that Kemalism disapproves-the fact of the matter is that Kemalism is categorically opposed to the very idea of opposition and it simply cannot withstand any criticism. I argue that this is a direct outcome of Kemalism's fundamental position that it and only it represents the superior knowledge of the West. I argue that for Kemalism, any criticism directed towards itself means in the final instance criticism of the scientific and rational principles behind the West, hence unacceptable. This is one of the defining characteristics of Kemalism that I identify as 'Orientalism from within.'

In similar fashion, Kemalism claims that people had been subjugated to ignorance and serfdom under centuries of Ottoman rule, as 'subjects' or 'flock' (*reaya*) of the Oriental despot. Furthermore Kemalism claims that it took power away from the Ottoman sultans and the parasitic formations around the palace, and gave it back to the people or the nation, where it truly belonged. The people under the republican regime were no longer servile subjects, but proud citizens. This is the loud and apparent discourse in Kemalism. Yet, there is a deeper discourse in Kemalism, too, which regards people as always needing the Kemalist guidance, without which they would fall for the false propaganda of the reactionary forces (*irtica*), who ceaselessly try to destroy Kemalism and take the country back to the *sharia*.

Two further examples of double discourses running through Kemalism that I discuss in Chapters Two and Four are (i) Kemalism's attitude towards the women's rights, and (ii) the positivistic and rationalist aspects of Kemalism vs the exaggerated adoration of Atatürk.

My identification of these double discourses that are operational at all elements of Kemalism points out to a fundamental deficiency in Kemalism in grasping the West in its totality and I argue that it is because of Kemalism's intricate relationship with Orientalism. In other words, since Kemalism accepts the basic premise of Orientalism that the West is superior to the East (Orient) in all respects, the Kemalists do not find it necessary to acquire a deeper understanding of the West on their own and subscribe to the western political concepts in a superficial way.

## **8. Islam as the Central Problem in Turkey for Kemalism**

I discuss the secularism of Kemalism in Chapter Three, and the first major argument I advance in that chapter is that from the outset, Islam has been the 'central problem' Kemalism had to deal with. As a rallying point and as a source of inspiration Islam was simply too powerful as a potential source of opposition for Kemalism to ignore. Even when an opposition party had nothing to do with those calling for a return to the *sharia*, Kemalism found it convenient to portray them as such. In this respect, the term *irtica*, which simply meant going backwards, and originally described the reactionary forces against the progressive agenda of the modernizers and westernizers, that is the Kemalists, was restricted solely to refer to religious groups, who were portrayed by the Kemalists as being ignorant, superstitious, irrational, etc. Remarkably, these terms had exactly been the same terms used to describe the Orient in the Orientalist discourse.

In Chapter Three, I look at the Kemalist reforms that were placed under constitutional protection in the 1961 and 1982 constitutions one by one and I argue that all these reforms were related to 'Islam as the central problem.' This again supports the main argument of the thesis that secularism is the most important aspect of Kemalism.

## **9. Two Distinct Attitudes towards Islam in Kemalism**

In Chapter Three, I identify two distinct attitudes towards Islam in Kemalism, one completely antagonistic towards it and the other that tries to keep it under control. The first attitude, whose clearest examples we see during the 1930s, is more utopian and is perhaps influenced by the attitudes of the totalitarian regimes at the time towards religion. Nevertheless, even in the 1930s, we see such people as Ahmet Hamdi Başar, as I discuss in Chapter Three, who recognize the fact that Islam is simply too entrenched in the Turkish society and culture, and who argue that it would be foolish for the Kemalist regime to engage in such a head-on attack against Islam. What needs to be done is to get rid of the centuries-long accumulation of superstition and ignorance in Islam and present the pure, unadulterated faith that was original Islam.

We again spot a double discourse in operation here, which made a distinction between a 'corrupt Islam,' the sum of the beliefs and practices that existed in the twentieth century Turkey, and the 'true Islam,' the discovery and support of which had to be Kemalism's aim. By definition, the true Islam Kemalism sought to reincarnate or create had to be consistent with reason and logic. It was also conceived as mostly a matter of conscience, without many public and social dimensions. It was certainly in harmony with the secularist principles of Kemalism.

## **10. Kemalist Secularism is Not 'Proper' Secularism**

When western observers look at Turkey, they are impressed by the strong secularist rhetoric of Kemalism and they assume when Kemalists talk about secularism, they are referring to the same concept as it has developed in the West, but I argue in Chapter Three that Kemalism's secularism cannot be secularism in the proper sense of the word. Firstly, Kemalist secularism entails strict control over Islam especially through the *Diyanet* branch of the government. Today, all the imams and other personnel found at more than 80 thousand mosques throughout Turkey are government employees. The imams cannot give sermons of their own on Fridays; they must read the sermon prepared and approved by the *Diyanet*. In Chapter Three I discuss in detail how the *Diyanet* was established in 1924, at the same as the caliphate was abolished. Briefly, *Diyanet* took the place of the Ottoman institution of *şeyhülislam* (or 'sheikh al islam' in English orthography), but during the debates at the parliament in 1924, it was made clear that the new institution would be strictly 'spiritual' and it would strictly refrain from getting involved in worldly matters.

The *Diyanet* is an anomaly in the secular Turkish regime, because it entails paying for the expenses of a certain religion with the taxpayers' money, in exchange for keeping a strict control over that said religion. Many commentators reflect on this unusual situation. For example, Olivier Roy writes, 'in a state described as *laïque* like Turkey, where the law contains no reference to Islam, there is, in fact, no separation of church and state, because imams are government



employees.’<sup>11</sup> Perry Anderson agrees: ‘For even when at apparent fever pitch, Turkish secularism has never been truly secular.’<sup>12</sup> Finally Betül Çelik: ‘Kemalist secularism, thus, despite its scepticism against Islam and its very attempt to limit religion's place in community life, remains 'a very Islamic kind of secularism.’<sup>13</sup>

If people in Turkey had been allowed to establish their own mosques, the Diyanet issue might be regarded as a curiosity, similar to the fact that in the UK, the queen is the head of the Anglican Church, but that is far from the case. Outside Diyanet, no mosques can legally exist. Throughout the world, fez is regarded as the traditional Ottoman Turkish headgear and turban is viewed as the traditional Muslim headgear, but in Turkey, no man is allowed to wear a fez or turban due to the Hat Law, which is still under constitutional protection, because it is one of the foremost Kemalist reforms. Likewise, the Sufi orders are officially banned. No Sufi convent can be opened legally.

This argument about Kemalism not being secularism in the conventional, western sense supports the main argument of the thesis, which relates secularism of Kemalism to Orientalism and regards it as essentially an attack against Islam, understood as a general signifier including the Ottoman Turkish tradition.

### **11. Secularism as a Kemalist Tool in Defining the Parameters of the Political and Limits of Political Debate**

The Kemalists have employed a variety of arguments to keep the criticism to a minimum level, to define the parameters of the political, and to limit the scope of the political debate in Turkey. In Chapter Three I discuss the following arguments employed in the Kemalist discourse:

1. Kemalism exaggerates the role of Mustafa Kemal in the national liberation struggle to the point that he is declared as the sole ‘saviour’ of the country from foreign invasion.
2. The Kemalist discourse saw granting political rights as a favour it granted.
3. The Kemalists take great pains to portray the religious conservatives as lacking in patriotic feelings, insincerity, and corruption.
4. The Kemalists also conveniently forget the religious rhetoric that was dominant in the early phases of the national struggle

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<sup>11</sup> Roy, O. (2005) *Secularism Confronts Islam*, New York: Columbia University Press, p. 14.

<sup>12</sup> Anderson, P. (2008) “Kemalism,” *The London Review of Books*.

<sup>13</sup> Çelik, N.B. (1996) “Kemalist Hegemony from Its Constitution to Its Dissolution,” Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Essex, p. 157.

5. The final argument I will refer to, that the Kemalists employ in their effort to ward off criticism is their claim that 'Turkey is the best country in the Muslim world for Muslims to live their religion freely.

This argument again highlights the centrality of secularism in Kemalism's struggle against opposition.

## **12. The Double Discourse in Kemalist Legitimation Strategies**

In Chapter Four, I discuss the various legitimation strategies employed by Kemalism, and I show that they are mainly based on the concepts Ottoman Turkish/Islamic tradition. I understand legitimation as an absolute necessity for the establishment and continuation of *any* political order. Though a political regime needs to stay legitimate in the eyes of the people it rules, the need for legitimacy is much more important when there has been a regime change, with the old regime still retaining some degree of legitimacy and the new regime still struggling to establish itself.

I look at the Ottoman legitimation problem and strategies employed by the Ottomans to acquire legitimacy, and I find striking similarities between the Ottoman and Kemalist legitimation strategies. Mustafa Kemal, like the Ottomans, first tried 'legitimation through authorization' in the early stages of his struggle. Then, he sought legitimacy through 'Divine Sanction,' which was granted because he was a *Gazi*, a holy warrior fighting the just cause of liberating the country (the abode of Islam, *Dar al-Islam*) from the enemy invasion. Again, the parallels with the Ottomans, especially with reference to *Gazi* is striking.

What does it mean that Kemalism resorted to the Ottoman Turkish/Islamic legitimation strategies? I advance several arguments here:

1. One discourse in Kemalism asserts that one of the fundamental principles of Kemalism is republicanism and one of the mottos of Kemalism especially during the national war of liberation was 'Sovereignty belongs to the nation without any condition or restraint.' However, (as I have also discussed extensively in Chapter Three) Kemalism does not recognize the people or the nation as sovereign. For Kemalism, the figure of Mustafa Kemal as Atatürk is sovereign, and Kemalism entails Kemalists exercising sovereignty in Atatürk's name. In other words, Kemalism cannot come to terms with the principle of popular sovereignty, which would require giving way to a western style liberal democratic society, where political power changes hands in freely held elections and where there is scope for more than one political party, opposition, criticism, press, etc. In such a regime, popular sovereignty would be the source of legitimation. Since Kemalism cannot draw

legitimacy in such a way, it is forced to derive legitimacy in the Ottoman Turkish/Islamic tradition.

2. Probably the most important legitimization strategy employed by Kemalism is the 'right of sword,' which places all the emphasis on the fact that Mustafa Kemal *saved* the country from enemy occupation and near certain destruction. This gave him enormous prestige, and allowed him a large degree of freedom in initiating his reforms. However, as time moved on, Kemalism could not produce further points to rally popular support around its cause, and found it necessary to return to the argument 'Mustafa Kemal, as Gazi and Atatürk, is the saviour of the nation, which is why you *must* support Kemalism' again and again. As I also discussed in Chapter Two, this necessitated exaggerating the hopelessness of the situation the country faced in 1918-1919, the importance of the national liberation war, and Mustafa Kemal's role in initiating the national resistance movement. In the meantime, the Ottoman Turkish involvement in the World War I was minimized and reduced to a story of inevitable destruction.

There was another reason Kemalism found the need to constantly emphasize the national liberation war and Mustafa Kemal's position as its leader and as *Gazi*. Despite all the blunders of the last Ottoman sultan, Mehmed Vahideddin, the Ottoman dynasty was still held in very high esteem by many people in Turkey, since it had ruled the country for more than six centuries and produced some of the greatest heroes of Turkish history. Hence, Kemalism's struggle to establish legitimacy was also a struggle to delegitimize the old Ottoman order. I argue that the point of Mustafa Kemal's rebellion against the Ottoman authority at the start of the national liberation movement defined Kemalism's stance against the Ottoman Turkish tradition, and formed the basis of Kemalist legitimization. The Kemalist principle of reformism or revolutionism symbolized the need to rise against this tradition, which Islam came to signify.

3. In Chapter Four, I also discuss in detail the various names Mustafa Kemal acquired during his lifetime, especially Gazi and Atatürk. Apart from serving the needs of legitimization, Mustafa Kemal disposing his Arabic sounding names and acquiring Atatürk as surname showed the dimensions of Kemalist utopia in getting rid of the past completely and creating a brand new social order. Mustafa Kemal's surname, Atatürk, signified the Kemalist attempt to define a new Turkish identity, based on allegiance to Kemalism.

Again, all of these arguments highlight the centrality of secularism in Kemalism, and support my main argument.

## Chapter One

### Under the Hegemony of Orientalism: Kemalism in the Making

I shall begin this chapter with an overview of the relations between the Ottoman Empire, Turkey, and the Turks, with Europe, until the era of modernisation. This will provide a useful background for us to appreciate why the Turkish experience with Europe was different than, say, the Egyptian, Algerian, or Indian experience. I shall then present a brief summary of the different interpretations of the successive generations of Turkish reformers, from the Tanzimat period to the Young Turks, and argue that these interpretations treated the relations between Europe and Turkey in simple, one-dimensional, and crude models. I will then argue that the magnitude of the change that happened in Turkey throughout the modernisation period constituted a pressure *by itself* on the modernisation process, with the psychological dimensions of alienation, search for identity, and loss of orientation.

After these preparatory steps, my analysis will move on to the main topic of the chapter, that is, the identification of the general European view towards the Ottoman Empire and the Turks as Orientalism. I will then present how I use the concept of Orientalism, and how my use differs from Edward Said's Orientalism. This will be followed by the identification of Kemalism as an 'Orientalism from within.' In the remaining part of the chapter, I will look at various aspects of Orientalism that I have identified, through a study of the newspaper stories, magazine articles, travel notes, and other sources from the nineteenth century Europe. These sources will help me construct a picture of the Orientalist view towards Turkey. I will then compare this view with the Kemalist view.

#### Turkey and Europe: An Historical Overview of a Complex Relationship until 1800

Turkey's relations with Europe have had a long history. The country was actually named as such by the Europeans-merchants from the Italian city states of Genoa and Venice in the thirteenth century, who were the first people to call lands of the Turkoman principalities in western Anatolia as Turchia.<sup>14</sup> With the Ottoman expansion into the Balkans, whole populations of Greeks, Bulgarians, Serbs, and other Christian 'nations' fell under Ottoman rule. Western Christendom

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<sup>14</sup> This point is frequently made by the eminent Turkish historian, Prof. İlber Ortaylı, who is currently the director of the Topkapi Palace Museum. Also see Fleet, K. (1999) *European and Islamic Trade in the Early Ottoman State: The Merchants of Genoa and Turkey*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 1.

was united in crusades against the Turks from the fourteenth century onwards. Knights from Hungary, France and England had fought at the Battle of Nicopolis against the Ottomans in 1396.<sup>15</sup> When the news of the fall of Constantinople in 1453 reached Europe, it was met with sorrow, panic, and lamentation. The 'terrible Turk' was universally condemned. The clergy preached that the Turks were the 'scourge of God,' sent as a punishment for the sins of the Christians.

In the sixteenth century, the Ottoman expansion into central Europe brought the demise of Hungary. Vienna was besieged twice by the Turks, and in 1683, it almost fell. In the eastern Mediterranean, the Ottomans captured ancient outposts of trade and chivalry one by one: Cyprus, Rhodes, and finally Crete. The battles of Preveza and Lepanto were the high points of rivalry at high seas between the Ottomans and the Europeans. Thus, the Ottomans were for a long time, the archenemy of Europe and 'Christendom.' In the heat of this struggle, the Ottomans and the Turks were seen to be the antithesis of what Europe stood for. In other words, the Ottomans were the epitome of the 'other' against which Europe came to define itself.

At this point, it is worth noting that until the early eighteenth century, the customary appellation (or, signifier) to refer to what we might call today as Europe, a geographical, political and cultural sense, had been not Europe, but Christendom. According to Norman Davies, the 'destructive effect of Reformation' was the primary cause that discredited 'the very name of Christendom.' Europeans then 'ceased to see any unity in Christianity, and stopped calling their civilisation Christendom. They looked instead for a different label; and they found, of course, the old term 'Europe'.'<sup>16</sup> Davies then notes that the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713 was the last international treaty which referred to the parties of the treaty as the 'princes of Christendom.' The later documents would refer to them as the 'princes of Europe.' That this change from 'Christendom' to 'Europe' happened around the same time the Enlightenment ideas started to gain circulation must be noted. However, some 14 years before the Treaty of Utrecht, the Treaty of Carlowitz in 1699 concluded the disastrous war (from the Ottoman perspective) after the end of the siege of Vienna in 1683, firmly ended the 150-year Ottoman rule in Hungary, and clearly signalled the fact that the Ottomans had ceased to be a serious threat to 'Christendom.' It then becomes quite compelling to argue that the elimination of the common Ottoman threat must have greatly facilitated the change from Christendom to Europe. Although it is very hard to establish a strict cause-and-effect relationship for such sweeping changes, this argument seems as plausible and

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<sup>15</sup> Although the conventional historiography of the Crusades enumerates eight crusades, with the last one held in 1270, the pan-European campaigns against the Ottomans in the fifteenth century, most notably those of Nicopolis in 1396 and Varna in 1444 were official crusades with the Pope's blessing and authorisation.

<sup>16</sup> Davies, N. (2007) *Europe East & West*, London: Pimlico, p. 13.

relevant as the fragmentation in the collective Christian identity after Reformation that Davies posits.

The Ottoman role in Europe far exceeded that of an irreconcilable adversary. In certain respects, the Ottomans had been an integral part of European politics and trade. Expensive silk brocades from Bursa and mohair from Angora, modern Ankara, were prized all over Europe. New historical research suggests that the spice trade through the Ottoman lands had continued well into the seventeenth century, long after the discovery of the round Africa trade route to India.

In the diplomatic sphere, the Ottoman sultans always showed a keen interest in European politics. The intervention of Suleiman I on behalf of the French king, in order to appease the Habsburg ruler Charles V is well known. However, perhaps equally important were the Ottomans' support for the Protestant principalities in Germany, which was crucial in their struggle against the Catholic Habsburg Empire.<sup>17</sup>

Further northeast, the Ottomans made supporting the Poles and the Swedes against the Russians the pillar of their policy. When Poland was partitioned among Prussia, Russia, and Austria from 1772 to 1795, the Ottomans refused to accept the disappearance of Poland as an independent country, and continued to recognise Poland. Whenever all European ambassadors were attending a palace function, the sultan would pointedly ask the ambassadors, but especially those representing Russia, Prussia, and Austria, 'Where is the Polish ambassador?' to show Ottoman solidarity with the Polish independence cause. When no one could give an answer, the grand vizier would reply to the sultan, 'The Polish ambassador is on his way! There are some difficulties at the roads...' and this public display continued right to the end of the Ottoman period. During the nineteenth century, there were a number of Polish rebellions, those in 1831, 1848 and 1863 being the most important ones, but they were all were crushed severely, and many Polish revolutionaries sought refuge in the Ottoman domains. In 1848, when Russia and Austria asked for the extradition of the Polish rebels, the Ottoman sultan Abdülmecid famously refused 'I will never give away those who sought refuge in my domains, even if I am forced to renounce my crown!' When pressures increased, the Ottomans argued that the Poles had converted to Islam, and Islamic law explicitly forbade extraditing Muslims to a foreign power. In those circumstances, some Polish refugees converted to Islam, and even joined the Ottoman military. General Josef Bem became Murat Paşa in the Ottoman army, and Count Michal Czajkowski took the name Mehmet Sadık Paşa, who fought against the Russians during the Crimean War. Likewise, Konstantyn Borzecki became Mustafa Celaleddin Paşa, who would later write a history of the

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<sup>17</sup> Setton, K. M. (1962) "Lutheranism and the Turkish Peril," *Balkan Studies*, III (1), pp. 136-165; Kortepeter, C. M. (1972) *Ottoman Imperialism During the Reformation: Europe and the Caucasus*, New York: New York University Press. I am indebted to Prof. Hasan Ünal for pointing this out to me.

Turks, *Les Turcs Anciens et Moderns*.<sup>18</sup> Turkish-Polish relations were re-established in 1924, after Poland became an independent country at the end of World War I.<sup>19</sup>

After the Crimean War, the Treaty of Paris expressly declared that the Ottoman Empire was part of 'the concert of Europe.' In 1867, Abdülaziz became the first Ottoman sultan to travel to Europe in a peaceful, cordial visit, as an honoured guest of the European monarchs in Paris, London, Liege, and Vienna. In this period, the Ottoman statesmen Ali and Fuad Paşas' diplomatic correspondence with European statesmen were regarded so highly that they were taught at diplomacy schools throughout Europe as the finest pieces of diplomatic penmanship.

When we look at how western authors viewed the Ottoman Empire until the nineteenth century, we see that this too had two facets. On the one hand, during the height of the Ottoman power in the sixteenth century, we come across such writers as Busbecq, who praised the Ottoman administration on the fairness of its dealings with the people and the high standards of justice. Busbecq was also impressed with the importance of merit in the promotion of the state's servants. Busbecq praised the lack of aristocratic privileges in the Ottoman system, as 'no single man owed his dignity to anything but his personal merits and bravery; no one is distinguished from the rest by his birth.' He considered this as a fair arrangement, because 'there is no struggle for precedence, every man having his place assigned to him in virtue of the function which he performs.'<sup>20</sup>

On the other hand, however, as we move further in time, we see that the opinions got progressively worse. While Busbecq viewed the Ottoman bureaucratic system as a meritocracy, Montesquieu, writing in the seventeenth century, regarded it as 'sick' where paşas bought 'their offices only by bribery.'<sup>21</sup> 'What had been admired in earlier accounts was order, discipline, and leadership: what was now deplored was injustice, corruption, and weakness.'<sup>22</sup>

Thus, what we see regarding Turkey's position vis-à-vis Europe is that of 'being in Europe, but not of Europe.'<sup>23</sup> Physically, geographically, administratively, and militarily the Ottoman Empire

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<sup>18</sup> Mustafa Celaledin Paşa was also the great-grandfather of the famous Turkish communist poet, Nazım Hikmet.

<sup>19</sup> Most of the information in this paragraph is from an article titled 'Turkish-Polish Relationships throughout History' from the website of the Embassy of Poland in Ankara at: <http://www.ankara.polemb.net/index.php?document=98> (Last accessed 1 September 2010).

<sup>20</sup> Busbecq, O.G. (2005), *The Turkish Letters of Ogier Ghiselin De Busbecq, Imperial Ambassador at Constantinople 1554-1562*, E.S. Forster (tr.), Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana University Press, p. 59.

<sup>21</sup> Montesquieu, C. S. (1999), *The Persian Letters*, G.R. Healy (tr.), Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, p. 36.

<sup>22</sup> Rubies, J.P. (2005) "Oriental Despotism and European Orientalism: Botero to Montesquieu," *Journal of Early Modern History*, vol. 9, no. 1-2, p. 128.

<sup>23</sup> Yurdusev, N. (2003) "Perceptions and Images in Turkish (Ottoman)-European Relations," in *Turkey's Foreign Policy in the 21st Century: A Changing Role in World Politics*, Ismael, T. Y. and Aydın, M. (eds.), Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, p. 78.

occupied a significant chunk of southeastern Europe, so it was not just a matter of influencing European policy, the way a regional or global power, say the United States would. In these senses, the Ottoman Empire was *in* Europe. It was customary in many maps to indicate the Ottoman lands in the Balkans as *European Turkey* or *Turkey in Europe*, whereas the Ottoman lands south of Marmara Sea would be labelled as *Asiatic Turkey* or *Turkey in Asia*.<sup>24</sup>

The Ottoman Empire's existence in Europe, or to be more precise, in the southeastern Europe or the Balkans, was not limited to military occupation. Besides other native groups such as the Bosnians, Albanians or the Pomaks (Muslim Bulgarians), the Ottoman Turks had settled in these lands and called it their home in large numbers since fourteenth century. Furthermore, the Ottoman historian Halil İnalcık's pioneering works from the early 1950s onwards attest to the fact that the Ottomans advanced in the Balkans by following a policy of accommodation (*istimalet*), in which they sought to protect the peasants from the excesses of the feudal nobility.<sup>25</sup>

In general, the Ottomans reduced the tax burden on the Balkan peasants, abolished much dreaded feudal obligations, and incorporated the land holding aristocratic families of the old regime into their system. When İnalcık published the Ottoman land register of Arvanid, in modern Albania, dated 1431, many people were surprised to see the names of Christian *timar* holders.<sup>26</sup> İnalcık would later observe, 'This discovery completely invalidated the widespread claims that the Ottoman conquest had led automatically to the expropriation of Christian landowners by the Muslim conquerors.'<sup>27</sup> In another article, İnalcık argues that the numerous crusading armies crossing the Balkans in the fifteenth century all expected the Christian peasants to collectively rise and join them, but such a widespread rebellion against Ottoman rule never happened. He then underlines the fault-line in the Balkans, with the overwhelming majority of the populace supporting the central Ottoman rule, and the feudal landowners and ancient local dynasties looking towards the West.<sup>28</sup>

When Bayezid I was defeated by Tamerlane in 1402 at Ankara, and the old Turkoman principalities were resuscitated in Anatolia, the Ottomans regrouped and regained their power by

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<sup>24</sup> This observation has been made on many occasions, including an article that appeared in the *Times* newspaper in 1964. The article considered Turkey's desire to join the European Economic Community and asked the question 'Is Turkey Part of Europe?' I will discuss this article at length towards the end of the chapter. *The Times* (1964) "Is Turkey Part of Europe?" 12 January, p. 11.

<sup>25</sup> İnalcık, H. (1954) "Ottoman Methods of Conquest," *Studia Islamica*, no. 2, pp. 103-129.

<sup>26</sup> İnalcık, H. (1954) *Hicri 835 tarihli Suret-i Defter-i Sancak-ı Arvanid*, Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yay. The *timar* was the coupling of an income source with military duty. The *timar* holder was given the right to collect taxes from a defined group of peasants in exchange for joining the military campaigns. In the land register İnalcık published, even some Orthodox priests were awarded with *timar*, in line with the Ottoman policy of winning the 'hearts and minds' of people.

<sup>27</sup> İnalcık, H. (1993) "The Shaykhs Story Told by Himself," in T. Naff (ed.) *Paths to the Middle East: Ten Scholars Look Back*, Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, p. 123

<sup>28</sup> İnalcık, H. (2005) "Türkler ve Balkanlar," *Bal-Tam Türklük Bilgisi*, no. 3, p. 29.



relying on their base in the Balkans. In fact, during the Battle of Ankara, when some of Bayezid's Turkish troops from Anatolia deserted to the Timur's side, who was a Turkic ruler from Central Asia, the 20 thousand-strong Serbian contingent in Bayezid's army stood fast and fought alongside Bayezid to the end.

As the Ottoman power waned, the withdrawal of Ottoman armies was accompanied by the inward migration of Turkish and Muslim people alongside. Hundreds of thousands of Muslims would follow the retreating Ottoman armies in the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78 and the Balkan Wars of 1911-12. Some of these Muslims did not speak Turkish but many did, and in any case, the large overlap of the Turkish identity with Islam meant all were welcome. It is estimated that when the Turkish Republic was founded in 1923, more than half of its population had been born outside of the then borders of Turkey. There is still a sizable Turkish minority in Bulgaria and in Western Thrace in Greece.<sup>29</sup> There are Turkish communities in Kosovo, Macedonia, Romania, and even in the Sanjak province of Serbia.

Yet, the Ottomans were not *of* Europe. The Ottoman Empire was famously called as 'the sick man of Europe,' and even that underlined an association with Europe. It was not called the sick man of 'the Orient,' or 'the Near East,' but 'Europe.' Still, whatever association that might have implied, the more important point was the prediction within it about the imminent death of the Ottoman Empire, after which point it would not matter whether the Ottoman Empire was part of Europe or not (But as we shall see, the end of the Ottoman Empire meant that the problem of defining Turkey's position vis-à-vis Europe was then transferred to the Turkish Republic).

In any case, the Ottomans themselves definitely did not self identify as Europeans, and neither did Europeans consider them so. Religiously, linguistically, culturally, the Ottomans had ties with the countries lying to their east and the south, not to the west and north. Until the nineteenth century, the Ottomans were confident in the supremacy of their culture, lifestyle, and worldview in general. In the literature left by the travellers and long-time residents describing 'life and manners' of the people in the Ottoman Empire, the typical Ottoman Turk was described as living a simple life and not showing any interest in things European at all. Although the Ottomans sent few ambassadors to Europe before 1800, those who left reports of their embassies show a marked disinterest in the European religion, culture or lifestyle.

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<sup>29</sup> The Turks in Bulgaria were persecuted under the communist regime, headed by Todor Jivkov, which culminated in the forced deportation of nearly 300 thousand Turks to Turkey in 1989. After the end of the Cold War, however, the Turks were able to form their own political parties, even entering the Bulgarian parliament and becoming partners in coalition governments. The Turks in Western Thrace, on the other hand, are still under Greek persecution. Despite the EU regulations, Greece refuses to recognise the Turkish minority, and insists on calling them 'Muslim Greeks.'

The first indications of a change in the Ottomans' attitudes towards Europe came in late eighteenth century. In this respect, Yirmisekiz Mehmet Çelebi's embassy in 1720-21 was a remarkable turning point. Mehmed Said Efendi, Yirmisekiz Mehmet Çelebi's son, became the first Ottoman statesman to learn French and around 1726, he partnered with İbrahim Müteferrika, a Hungarian convert to Islam, to establish the first printing press in the Ottoman Empire.<sup>30</sup> Napoleon Bonaparte's Egyptian expedition in 1798 was another eye-opener. Napoleon's army moved swiftly and operated much more efficiently compared to anything the provincial administration in Egypt or the central administration in Istanbul had ever seen.<sup>31</sup>

During Selim III's reign, there was much soul-searching. Selim III asked his high-ranking statesmen to write him reports, describing the situation the empire was in, the problems the state faced, and proposals for solutions to these problems. It seems that there was a sudden realisation that the power balance between the Ottoman Empire and European states had drastically changed. In an anti-Abdülhamid book published in 1908 in Egypt by a Young Turk, the author fictionalised Selim III as saying: 'When I sat on the throne, I saw the building of the state in ruins. I looked at the nation and turned my face in sorrow to Europe. I shuddered in trepidation. They had entered the world of progress, while we were sinking in the abyss of decay. While they were developing in the acquisition of knowledge, politics, sciences, and military profession, we were declining. I understood that it was not the time for crying.'<sup>32</sup>

### **Ottoman Turkish Reformers: No Passive Recipients under European Pressure**

In order to appreciate the complex nature of the relationship between Europe and Turkey, let us look at how subsequent generations of Ottoman reformers were viewed in later times. The period from the proclamation of the Tanzimat in 1839 to the declaration of the first Ottoman constitution is customarily called the Tanzimat period. The efforts of the Tanzimat statesmen, epitomised by the trio Mustafa Reshid Paşa, Ali Paşa, and Fuad Paşa, symbolised this period. The earliest interpretations of the Tanzimat reforms, dating back from late nineteenth century were quite critical. The first group of commentators assumed that these statesmen were instruments or puppets of the European powers, especially Britain, doing whatever they were told to do by the ambassadors of the European powers.

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<sup>30</sup> Göçek, F. M. (1987) *East Encounters West: France and the Ottoman Empire in the Eighteenth Century*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 80-81.

<sup>31</sup> Said, E. (1978) *Orientalism*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., pp. 76-95.

<sup>32</sup> Receb (1908) *Mahkeme-i Kübra*, Kahire: Matbaa-i İctihad, p. 27.

Another group of commentators regarded these statesmen to be shrewd politicians, proclaiming reforms only to appease the European powers with no sincere intention of carrying them out. They were portrayed as people with no principles or grand plan, and when the word 'politician' was used for them it was in a negative manner, as in politicking for personal interest. These Ottoman statesmen told the European public what it wanted to hear, always finding excuses for the slow speed of the reform process, trying to buy time, being apologetic. But when they addressed the domestic audience, they explained that Europe was powerful and they were resisting the arrogant demands of the Europeans as much as they could. Hence, to this second group of observers, the Ottoman statesmen embodied all that was wrong with the Ottoman Empire: rotten, only thinking personal gain, ignorant, unable to rise to the occasion and act decisively, insincere, untrustworthy.

What united these two wildly differing interpretations was the basic, one dimensional view of the relationship between the European statesmen and their counterparts in the Ottoman Empire. They both regarded the Tanzimat statesmen as passive actors, who lacked the courage to do what the situation demanded them. In contrast, the European statesmen were regarded much more highly, since at least they were the ones who knew what the Ottomans had to do and who were prepared to put pressure on the Tanzimat statesmen.

In 1940, a symposium was held in Turkey on the centennial of the Tanzimat. Now that the Ottoman Empire had come to an end and the long modernisation efforts that began with the Tanzimat having resulted in the foundation of the Turkish Republic and the Atatürk reforms, the Tanzimat statesmen were viewed as having determined the problems correctly, but unfortunately being constrained by the 'decaying' Ottoman polity. They were seen as the originators of the necessary reforms, but their reforms were seen as not ambitious or radical enough. The basic conclusion of this symposium was that while these men of Tanzimat might have had some greatness in them, they simply could not match the genius of Atatürk.<sup>33</sup>

Apart from this anachronistic comparison with Atatürk, later historical research on the Tanzimat period agreed with the primary argument of this symposium in 1940 that the Tanzimat statesmen were neither puppets of the European ambassadors nor double-faced, insincere politicians bent on preserving the Ottoman ancien regime. This did not completely rule out the possibility of their decisions being influenced by Europe; it simply acknowledged an active and independent role, albeit a constrained one, for the Tanzimat statesmen in the development of events.

Remarkably, when we move forward in time and look at the European reaction to the Ottoman reformers of the later periods, we see parallels with the case for the Tanzimat statesmen

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<sup>33</sup> The proceedings of the symposium was published. *Tanzimat* (1940), Ankara: TC Maarif Vekaleti.

described above. When the first Ottoman constitution was declared under the leadership of Midhat Paşa in 1876, it came as a sudden and unexpected response to the crisis in the Balkans, where the non-Muslim ethnic groups, especially the Bulgarians, had been getting restless. A war between Russia and the Ottoman Empire seemed imminent, which caused great concern in the European capitals, especially London. An international conference had been convened to solve the crisis.

The news that the Ottoman sultan had accepted the move towards a constitutional monarchy came as a surprise to the European diplomats at the conference. Midhat Paşa immediately claimed that the constitutional monarchy was the answer to the Bulgarian demands for more civil rights and reform, and that the conference was not needed anymore. Midhat Paşa was then regarded as a clever politician and the declaration of the constitutional monarchy was seen as an opportunistic move, or as an insincere act only designed to appear to the Europeans that the Ottoman administration was doing something.

In any case, when the Russo-Turkish war eventually began in 1877 and was used as an excuse for Abdülhamid II to 'temporarily' suspend the parliamentary sessions and put the constitution 'on hold'<sup>34</sup> this gave more credence to the European suspicions. When we consider Midhat Paşa's actions, we can say that there was certainly some manipulation, but it was not just towards the European audience; it was partly towards the domestic audience, too. We see once again the temptation to view Europe's effect on Ottoman modernisation as a one dimensional affair.

Similar issues can be raised for the Young Turks. From the onset of the Young Turk opposition to Abdülhamid II from the 1890s onwards, through the 1908 revolution and the CUP's ascension to power in the revolution's aftermath, there was always an element of suspicion and scepticism in the European public opinion towards the Young Turks' intentions. It seems that the keyword connecting the European observers' evaluation of these different generations of Ottoman modernizers was 'sincerity': the Europeans could not make sure if these modernizers had internalised European values and were acting sincerely in their reform policies, or if their reform efforts were just an appearance, with no depth and no real intention to change, but only to ease the pressure to reform on them.

This brings us to the radical westernisers, or *Garpcılar*, in the Turkish modernisation project, whose origins were among the Young Turk era. By that time, it had become clear that it was very difficult to separate the technical or technological aspects of modernisation with the cultural or civilisational aspects. One could not just establish a modern faculty of medicine and then expect

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<sup>34</sup> It has to be noted though that Abdülhamid never annulled the imperial decree for the establishment of the constitutional monarchy and he never abolished the parliament. Throughout his reign of more than 30 years, the constitution formally remained in effect.

the students not to think about the philosophical aspects of treating the human body as a biological machine.<sup>35</sup> The westernisers subscribed to the idea that modernisation had to be in the form of accepting the western European values and norms as a whole. Despite Kemalism's claims that the Kemalist reforms originated in Mustafa Kemal's mind, the influence of such westernisers as Abdullah Cevdet and Kılıçzade Hakkı on his thought is undeniable.<sup>36</sup> Kemalism put into practice what these westernisers had theorised in the crucial second constitutional period.

### *The Magnitude of Change in Turkey from 1800 to 1940*

I would like to pause here and reflect on the magnitude of change that Turkey underwent from 1800 to 1940. Turkey was transformed from an empire with extensive lands in the Balkans and sizable non-Muslim populations to a nation-state with much smaller boundaries and a much homogeneous population. In 1800 Turkey was a monarchy, headed by a sultan, who came from a long established and glorious dynasty, who was also the caliph with a spiritual claim over the Muslim community. This period saw first the declaration of constitutional monarchy and the creation of a parliament, then the abolition of both the sultanate and the caliphate, culminating in a republic.

The modernisation and westernization changed the appearance of the country to such a degree that, by 1940 the Turks were living a life which would be considered alien, foreign, inferior, and unholy to their great grandfathers in 1800. If a Turk or Muslim dressed in western clothes and wore a hat in 1800, he would be considered an apostate and his marriage would be declared void. Such an act would mean renouncing his faith and his identity, and it would be tantamount to treason. By 1940, the Turks not only assumed the western garb, they replaced their script, their music and their culture with the western counterparts.

The sheer magnitude of the change that happened in Turkey throughout the modernisation period constituted a pressure *by itself* on the modernisation process, with the psychological dimensions of alienation, search for identity, and loss of orientation. But the most remarkable point is that all of this had happened by the *consent* of the Turks, not by the Europeans forcing their way in. At least, the Turks believed it to be so. The Turks went on a course of modernisation, which at the end turned into wholesome westernization, *not because* Turkey was occupied by a European power and the Turks were forced to do so, but because the Turks decided that it was

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<sup>35</sup> Incidentally, Turkish medical students receiving education based on the western model were among the first to embrace the positivistic and secularist ideas. Beşir Fuad and Abdullah Cevdet, the two most prominent westernizers, were medical doctors, as well as Ahmed Rıza, Nazım, and Bahaeddin Şakir, who played important roles in the Committee of Union and Progress.

<sup>36</sup> Hanioglu, M. Ş. (1997) "Garpçılar: Their Attitudes toward Religion and Their Impact on the Official Ideology of the Turkish Republic" *Studia Islamica*, No. 86, pp. 133-158.

the only option for their survival. I think most commentators on the Turkish modernisation miss the operational logic and do not appreciate the pressure coming from within to shake off and transform.

### **The European View of the Ottoman Empire and the Turks: Orientalism at Work**

I now come to presenting the main argument of this chapter that the effect of Europe on Turkish modernisation has been on a much deeper level and that the relationship between the two, that is Europe and the Turkish modernisation, was a much more complex affair than it was ever portrayed in the literature. The sections above have prepared the groundwork for this argument.

In the first section, I first wanted to show that relations between Europe and Turkey had a long and chequered history until 1800, and then I have tried to convey a sense of how difficult it must have been from the Turkish side to first acknowledge defeat, and then try imitation, and finally a total embrace. In the second section, I have discussed how the influence of Europe over subsequent generations of Turkish modernizers was viewed in simplistic terms.

This brief overview of the historiography of Turkish modernisation highlighted the one dimensional and limited nature that it accorded to the interaction in between and underlined the necessity of looking at the European influence over the Turkish modernizers, especially the westernisers, culminating in the Kemalists.

When the Europeans looked at the Ottoman Empire, they had a remarkably consistent view regarding the situation it was in and the measures it needed to take towards progress and development. Similarly, the European views on the Turks, the Turkish customs, culture, and lifestyle converged on many points. Accordingly, the Turks were seen as irrational, ignorant, superstitious, fanatical, barbarous, backward, traditional, fatalistic, lazy people with a corrupt, inefficient government, ruled by an 'Oriental Despot.' This was not a one-sided view; the Europeans views reflected as much as what they thought on the Ottoman Empire and the Turks as they reflected their self-image. The Ottoman Empire and the Turks provided a convenient 'other' for Europe to define itself. Hence, the Europeans viewed themselves as rational, enlightened, scientific, sensible, civilised, progressive, modern, hardworking people with an honest, efficient government, ruled under the ideals of civil liberties and determined to keep their destiny at hand.

The difference between Europe/West and the Ottoman Turkey/East was so stark that a barrier appeared to separate these two realms. This barrier not only separated Europe/West from the East, it also helped distinguish what Europe was and define it. In parallel with the enormous size of the difference between the two realms, the barrier appeared formidable indeed, but the question was if it was insurmountable. While some thought it was possible for the reforms in the Ottoman Empire to succeed, many had strong reservations, and some thought it was just impossible. The question 'Can the Turks reform so that their country looks just like a European country' proved to be a very difficult one, because the question not only referred to the Turks but also to the very definition of what it meant to be European.

THE WEST or EUROPE	THE GREAT EAST/WEST DIVIDE	THE ORIENT or the OTTOMAN EMPIRE/TURKEY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Rational</li> <li>- Enlightened</li> <li>- Scientific</li> <li>- Sensible</li> <li>- Civilised</li> <li>- Progressive</li> <li>- Modern</li> <li>- Determined to keep his destiny at hand</li> <li>- Hardworking</li> <li>- Honest</li> <li>- Efficient</li> <li>- Rule of law, civil liberties</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Irrational</li> <li>- Ignorant</li> <li>- Superstitious</li> <li>- Fanatical</li> <li>- Barbarous</li> <li>- Backward</li> <li>- Traditional</li> <li>- Fatalistic</li> <li>- Lazy</li> <li>- Corrupt</li> <li>- Inefficient</li> <li>- Ruled by 'Oriental Despot'</li> </ul>

**Figure 1: The Orientalist View of the West/Europe and the Orient/Ottoman Empire or Turkey**

There were many reasons given for the impossibility of the task awaiting the Ottoman and Turkish modernizers, and these reasons changed in time, paralleling the changes in the European self-image. Early on, the fault in Turkey was mostly seen with Islam. It was claimed that as long as the Turks remained Muslim, they could not modernize; hence the very first precondition for the Turks if they wanted to become as powerful as European states was to denounce Islam and become Christians. With the development of racial theories, the difference was seen as racial.

This view reminded that the Turks had come from Central Asia, and the Turkish race had always been a militaristic race. The Turks were called 'Asiatic,' 'barbarous,' or 'uncivilised.'<sup>37</sup>

İsmail Kara's enumeration of the main elements of the Orientalist view towards Turkey has close parallels with the scheme I have presented above. According to Kara:

'The Orientalists were roughly saying the following as observations towards Islam and the Muslims:

- a. A religion and collection of beliefs that are soiled with superstitions, silly tales, myths, and legends;
- b. A tyrannical (authoritarian/totalitarian/despotic) political regime; a docile society that shuns raising its voice;
- c. An idle, inactive, lazy, and indifferent social structure and web of relations, which values the afterlife more than this world;
- d. A social life in which there is no equality between women and men, Muslim and non-Muslim, free and slave, from a legal, political and status point of view.
- e. A mentality and way of life that emphasises passive resignation to fate, forbearance, destiny, and being satisfied with what is sufficient for survival, over a mentality that emphasises hard work, free will, and individual reasoning;
- f. An understanding of science and knowledge, whose scientific and philosophical development had stopped in the twelfth century, bogged down in endless repetitions, explanations, and commentaries, and an educational style that cannot create new problematics, and for that reason, had been left in the past...'<sup>38</sup>

#### *The General European View towards the Ottoman Empire and the Turks as Orientalism*

I will use the term Orientalism to describe this general European view towards the Ottoman Empire and the Turks. Using Orientalism in this sense is not without precedent; in fact it has gained widespread acceptance in Turkey in the last few decades. This is obviously related to the rise of the popularity of Edward Said's work, *Orientalism* and the subsequent questioning of the

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<sup>37</sup> Norman Housley summarizes the prevailing views in Europe against the Turks in the fifteenth century as follows: '...the consequences of the Ottoman conquests included not just the extinction of the Christian faith, but also the end of civilized values. The Turks were barbarians, enemies of the New Learning based on classical texts and values ... The conquest of Constantinople, a city revered by the humanists as a treasury of ancient texts, was lamented as a devastating blow to classical Greek culture.' Housley, N. (2009) *Religious Warfare in Europe, 1400-1536*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 133.

<sup>38</sup> Kara, İ. (2008) *Cumhuriyet Türkiye'sinde Bir Mesele Olarak İslam*, İstanbul: Dergah Yay., pp. 373-374. Although Kara's book was published in June 2008, I have become aware of it in January 2009 while working on Chapter Three, a few months after completing the first draft of this chapter.



role of the Orientalist studies in the European domination over the Orient. However, there are some clear differences with Edward Said's concept of Orientalism and the way it is used in this thesis and in the debates in contemporary Turkey.

Firstly, Edward Said was mainly concerned with Orientalism as an academic discipline for which the Orient was its subject matter. Hence, one of the major criticisms of Edward Said's work was his focus on mainly the French and British scholars and his disregard of the important contributions of Orientalists from other countries, such as Germany, the Netherlands, or Russia.<sup>39</sup> Said was then interested in how this production of academic knowledge was used in the colonizing policies of the European powers. Rather than the development of Orientalism first as an academic discourse then as an imperialistic discourse, I am more interested in the hegemonizing aspect of the Orientalist discourse first on the European public opinion and second on the Ottoman and Turkish modernizers.

I am more interested in the results and effects of Orientalism than the processes through which it was produced. In other words, I do not understand Orientalism as an ideology, but as an articulation that changes subject-positions. I would like to distinguish two levels in the articulations brought about by Orientalism. The first one is its ability to hegemonize the public opinion in Europe. I contend that most critiques of Orientalism point at its shortcomings in this respect, and these critiques mostly work by pointing out the notable exceptions in Europe regarding Said's concept of Orientalism, or the lack of those exceptions in Said's analysis. However, Orientalism was also a discourse that affected the people-statesmen, reformers, journalists, intellectuals, religious scholars, etc- in the Orient. To this Oriental audience, Orientalism appeared as the voice of Europe's common sense.

The second point has to do with the observation that the Ottoman Empire as a state, Turkey as a country or geographical region, or Turks as a people are conspicuously missing in Edward Said's book *Orientalism*, despite the fact that the Ottoman Empire was the ruling political entity over the whole Near East, including the Fertile Crescent, the Holy Land, and Egypt-the areas with which Said was mostly concerned. Keith Windschuttle in his scathing critique of Said reaches this conclusion: 'He [Said] has nothing on the other areas that traditionally comprised the field such as Hebrew, Persian, Turkish, Indian, and Far Eastern cultures.'<sup>40</sup> A careful study, helped by the index of Said's book, reveals the extraordinary extent of this absence.

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<sup>39</sup> Lewis, B. (2001) "The Question of Orientalism," in A.L. Macfie (ed.), *Orientalism: A Reader*, New York: New York University Press, pp. 249-272; Windschuttle, K. (1999) "Edward Said's 'Orientalism revisited'," *The New Criterion*, Vol. 17, No.5, January 1999.

<sup>40</sup> Windschuttle, K. (1999) "Edward Said's 'Orientalism revisited'".

Throughout the 328 dense pages of *Orientalism*, Turks as a people are mentioned only 3 times, as opposed to the Arabs appearing 35 times.<sup>41</sup> In none of these rare instances does Said talk directly about the Turks. In all three cases, he refers to the Turks only in passing, as passive subjects. On the first occasion, he talks about Napoleon's appeal 'to the Egyptians on their behalf against the Turks.'<sup>42</sup> Next time it is about 'the rebellion of Arabs against the Turks,'<sup>43</sup> and finally 'the Arabs' quarrel with the Turks.'<sup>44</sup> He never discusses what the Turks might have thought about Europe or Orientalism. Turkey appears at 6 instances, as opposed to Egypt at 50, Palestine at 13, and India at 42 occasions. Most remarkably, Said manages to finish his book with not a single reference to Constantinople, while Cairo appears on 9 different pages and Damascus 3. While he refers to Arabic on more than 30 occasions and to Persian on 5, the Turkish language appears only once and even then in the list of Oriental languages, not in a direct discussion.

Said mentions the Ottoman Empire in *Orientalism* on 11 occasions, but all of these are indirect, *in passing* references. For example, Said refers to the Ottoman Empire when he is talking about 'the territory of the now hopelessly ill Ottoman Empire,'<sup>45</sup> 'the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire and the Arab revolt,'<sup>46</sup> or when he is listing the titles of the six lectures by Valentine Chirol, 'a well-known European newspaperman of great experience,' one of which happens to be 'the Passing of the Ottoman Empire.' All of these occurrences are indirect and passive references; Said never makes the Ottoman Empire as the active subject of his discussion.

Although Said refers to many Arab personalities, from Ibn Khaldun of the classical, King Faisal of the contemporary (with respect to the period under his study), and Albert Hourani of the modern period in his book, he does not refer to a single Turkish person in his work-not a single Ottoman sultan, Ottoman vizier, Turkish modernizer, or modern scholar. The only Turkish name that appears in *Orientalism* is Flaubert's fictional character, Kuchuk Hanem (Little, or Junior Lady), but then she turns out to be an 'Egyptian dancer.'

I think this is not an indication of sloppy scholarship on Said's part, but it points out to a fundamental difference in how the Turks responded to the rise of modern Europe vis-à-vis the rest of the peoples of the Orient, for example the Arabs, or the Indians. Respectively, the European, or the Orientalist treatment of the Turks was different, too. The complex historical background of the relationship between Europe and the Ottoman Empire has been discussed above, so I will not go into those details again, and in any case, it is beyond the scope of this study to consider the Arabs' or Indians' response to the growing power and influence of Europe over

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<sup>41</sup> Said, E. (1978) *Orientalism*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid*, p. 217.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid*, p. 238.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid*, p. 242.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid*, p. 220.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid*, p. 248.

the Orient. I will simply state that throughout the modernisation period, a feeling of defeat and disappointment had always been present on the Turkish side. One of the most vexing problems that concerned the Ottoman/Turkish commentators was the question: What went wrong? How come things developed this way so that in the end Europe became much more powerful and developed while Turkey lagged behind and became weaker and weaker?

The most important manifestation of the difference in Europeans' perception of the Turks vis-à-vis the other peoples of the Orient will be discussed in the next section below. For the Europeans, it was not enough to have triumphed over the Turks. There was a widespread agreement to 'drive the Turks out of Europe.' Some zealots even spoke of sending the 'Turkish hordes' back to where they came from, namely the faraway lands of Central Asia. When the British took control of India or Egypt, there was no such talk. There was no question of 'driving the Egyptians out to the desert,' no arguments as to 'why the Egyptians do not deserve to live in Egypt.' Although there was a native Coptic Christian community in Egypt, they did not appeal to the European public for the establishment of a *Coptic-land* in Egypt, the way the Greeks, the Armenians, and other Balkan peoples did. While colonial empires were being established by the British, the French, and other European nations all around the world, the native peoples were at least secure in the knowledge that if they obeyed their colonial masters, they would be able to preserve their existence in their respective homelands.

Of all people, one would expect Edward Said, whose family had been forced to flee Palestine in 1948 when the state of Israel was founded, would have been best placed to appreciate the effects of this European attitude on the Turkish psyche. Of all people, Said would be the one person to appreciate the lasting legacy of generations of emigrants from the Balkans, the Caucasus, and other parts of the Ottoman Empire, who saw the Turkish Republic as the last stand from where there would be no place left to retreat. One could argue that after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the establishment of the Turkish Republic, Turkey cut off all its ties with the Arab lands, hence it did not have any role in the recent history of the Arab world, but that would miss the inspirational role Atatürk and Kemalism played in the development of the nationalist post-imperial ideologies throughout the Middle East, from the Abdel Nasser of Egypt to Shah Reza Pahlavi of Iran, and even to Saddam Hussein of Iraq.<sup>47</sup>

### *The Hegemonic Dimensions of the Orientalist Discourse*

In *Orientalism*, Edward Said makes a few but crucial references to Gramsci and his concept of hegemony. He started with Gramsci's distinction between civil and political society, and

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<sup>47</sup> I am indebted to Prof. Ernesto Laclau for reminding me this point.

considered culture as 'operating within civil society, where the influence of ideas, of institutions, and of other persons works not through domination but by what Gramsci calls consent.'<sup>48</sup> For Said, hegemony operated at the level of culture, which for him was an example of 'saturating hegemonic systems.'<sup>49</sup>

The key passage in which Said identified Orientalism as cultural hegemony is as follows: 'In any society not totalitarian, then, certain cultural forms predominate over others, just as certain ideas are more influential than others; the form of this cultural leadership is what Gramsci has identified as *hegemony*, an indispensable concept for any understanding of cultural life in the industrial West. It is hegemony, or rather the result of cultural hegemony at work, that gives Orientalism the durability and the strength I have been speaking about so far.'<sup>50</sup> Nevertheless, he does not develop the relationship between Orientalism and hegemony further in his work, which is unfortunate, because the concept of hegemony would have helped him immensely in exploring how Orientalism was an articulation on not just the Orient, but the idea of Europe, too.

Furthermore, for Said, the Orientalist hegemony is nothing but the 'Western hegemony over the Orient,'<sup>51</sup> but it never occurs to him that the definition of hegemony he has just provided requires the existence of a society ('any society'), in which 'certain cultural forms' compete for hegemony. Hence, to use the concept of hegemony in its proper, Gramscian sense, would require Said to look at competing discourses in the West towards the Orient, out of which Orientalism could emerge as the hegemonic one. The problem is that the West and the Orient does not make a unified social and political entity, at least in Said's narrative. Said's Orientalists primarily address a Western audience, they are not concerned with how their work might affect the lives of the Orientals. Said complains about the passive status of the Orient in the works of the Orientalists, but then he joins them by keeping the Orient mum to such an extreme that one begins to wonder if he does it deliberately to show how frustrating the Orientalist treatment must be.

It is very important to recognise that Orientalism as a hegemonic practice, as described by Said, did not fit the normal process through which a hegemony could be expected to arise, namely, out of a struggle among competing discourses in a given society, for the simple yet fundamental reason that the Orientalists and the Orientals did not live in the *same* society. It is true that Orientalism might be considered as the hegemonic discourse in the West regarding the Orient, which would imply that Orientalism came to dominate the Western view towards the East.<sup>52</sup> But then, this would be a purely Western affair with no relationship to the peoples living in the

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<sup>48</sup> Said, E. (1978) *Orientalism*, p. 7.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid*, p. 14.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid*, p. 7.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid*, p. 8.

<sup>52</sup> In addition, when one looks at the question carefully, it becomes apparent that there was really no other alternative discourse in the West which could be said to have competed against Orientalism.

Orient. In other words, depicting Orientalism as a product of the developments in the West for which the Orient was merely a passive subject would simply reproduce the Orientalist hegemony, and this indeed is one of the most significant criticisms directed towards Said.

In this thesis, and especially in this chapter, I try to accommodate the existence of two distinct entities (having two separate discursive horizons), namely the West and the Orient, within which the discourses under question could operate. I then treat Orientalism as a unique discourse that could address both audiences, possibly in different voices. I also attribute a privileged position to the Orientalist discourse when it addressed the Orient, and that privileged position is derived from Orientalism's hegemony, which was in essence the Western hegemony over the East. Nevertheless, the East is not silent in my analysis; various modernizing discourses such as Kemalism, Islamism, Turkism, Ottomanism, were competing against each other for hegemony, and in turn they were all influenced by the Orientalist hegemony, though to varying degrees. Hence, I have in mind two distinct but interrelated hegemonic dimensions, that of Orientalism *over* the competing modernizing discourses, and that *among* them.

#### *Primary Sources as the Means to Uncover Orientalism*

In *Orientalism* Edward Said was mainly concerned with scholarly works of the Orientalists, such as Silvestre de Sacy's *Chrestomathie arabe* or Edward William Lane's *Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*, as the primary medium through which the Orientalist discourse was established and disseminated. His sweep was on the cultural and intellectual domain, rather than the political domain. In this chapter, I will be looking at a more diverse set of works, from travelogues to newspaper reports, from magazine articles to parliamentary speeches. The objectivity and accuracy of these texts might be questioned. With respect to travel reports, there is always a danger of exaggeration, not to mention the possibility that the author was in fact an 'arm-chair traveller,' writing in the comfort of his home having never left it, fantasising about the Orient and plagiarising other authors. With respect to newspaper reports, there is the question of audience and the day-to-day flow of events that might hinder judgment.

Nevertheless, short of visiting the Orient in person and learning the languages, culture and history of the Oriental peoples, these texts remained the only source of information regarding the Orient in the West, not only for common people, but for political theorists, too, from Bodin to Montesquieu, from Voltaire to Marx. The interplay between the traveller-reporters of the Orient and their audience in the West is succinctly summarized by Joan-Pau Rubies in an informative article, although his focus is at an earlier period than the one I study:

'... the important conclusion is the emergence of what we may call an early-modern cultural structure by which the process of interaction between observers and thinkers, once established, tended to recur: hence the traveller sent reports to Europe, the historian-cosmographer selected and generalized, a debate could ensue, and future travellers might carry new concepts abroad, or perhaps even seek to travel in order to disprove particular formulations. It was the awareness of the crucial methodological issues underlining this dialogue between travellers and philosophers, or between evidence and generalization, which defined the relative maturity of the orientalism of the Enlightenment. Indeed, the early-modern dialogue between travellers and men of learning should be considered as an important element in the development of a modern discourse on comparative politics.'<sup>53</sup>

In a sense, then, I will take the whole field of the critique of Orientalism as the starting point, but instead of keeping the focus on the European side of the relationship, which I think indirectly serves the Orientalist bias, I will also take into account the other side, that is, how the Turks responded to the Orientalist discourse, and how that discourse came to play a determining role in the Turkish modernisation under Kemalism.

#### *The Influence of the Orientalist Discourse over the Ottoman Turkish Domain*

The Orientalist discourse manifested itself on the Ottoman Turkish audience through a multiplicity of channels. In this respect, the Ottoman statesmen's relations with the European diplomats and statesmen played an important role. Here, the hegemonic dimension manifested itself on various levels, including displays of brute power, or threats thereof. If a situation involving citizens of the European powers, or Ottoman subjects under the protection of these powers arose at a port city in the Mediterranean, the European powers immediately sent their warships to the area.<sup>54</sup> The European ambassadors frequently exceeded diplomatic courtesy, and did not refrain from treating the local Ottoman authorities with contempt.<sup>55</sup> In one famous instance, when the newly erected telegraph poles disturbed the view of the Russian embassy, the ambassador got angry and ordered the removal of the obstructing poles. When the Ottoman local

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<sup>53</sup> Rubies, J.P. (2005) "Oriental Despotism and European Orientalism: Botero to Montesquieu," *Journal of Early Modern History*, vol. 9, no. 1-2, pp. 173-174.

<sup>54</sup> For example, during the Lebanon crisis in 1861. Farah, C. E. (2000) *The politics of interventionism in Ottoman Lebanon, 1830-1861*, London and New York: I.B. Tauris, pp. 216-217.

<sup>55</sup> A biography of the British statesman William Gladstone referred to Lord Stratford de Redcliffe, the British ambassador at Constantinople during the Crimean War, as 'possessing almost sovereign ascendancy at the Porte.' Morley, J. (1911) *The Life of William Ewart Gladstone - Vol I: 1809-1859*, London: Macmillan, p. 361.

administrator tried to speak to him, the Russian ambassador dismissed him summarily, and declared that if there was a problem, the grand vizier himself needed to talk to him.<sup>56</sup>

When the ambassadors of the European countries addressed the Ottoman foreign minister, grand vizier, or even the Ottoman sultan, they spoke like a teacher lecturing his pupils about such high concepts as the rule of law, minority rights, administrative efficiency, and fight against corruption. When they were referring to a provincial disturbance that involved the non-Muslim subjects of the Ottoman Empire, for example, they would state 'As you well know, it is the duty of a civilised state to protect the life and the property of all people living under its jurisdiction, including the minorities,' with the thinly-veiled implication that the Ottoman Empire did not measure up to the standards of being a 'civilised state.' The Ottoman response tried to minimize the issues, took a humble and apologetic tone, and always found excuses on why it could not meet those high standards and why it could not keep the earlier promises. If we compare this attitude with those of the contemporary European diplomats, statesmen, and journalists towards Turkey during Turkey's negotiations with the EU for membership, especially in the late 1990s, the parallels are striking. The contemporary Turkish responses carry similarities with the Ottoman period.

When Enver wrote 'I hope, my dear friend, we can show to civilised Europe that we are not 'barbarians with no possession of law' and that we deserve to be shown respect' in a letter in French that he sent to a friend, a German lady, in 1911, he was responding to countless occasions in the books, travel reports, newspaper stories, and magazine articles, where the Turks were called 'barbarians.' According to Hans-Lukas Kieser, Enver Paşa's letters reflected 'the contradictory effects of heading towards the Western Civilisation, the Young Turks' search for identity, German and late-Ottoman military schools, the European cultural imperialism, the pride of Islam and the Turkish chauvinism in the most explanatory way.'<sup>57</sup> I think the concept of a hegemonic struggle that raged throughout the discursive horizon aptly describes the complexity of the situation.

When looked at this way, Kemalism appears as a counter-current to the full circle that Turkey's relations with Europe has come. Kemalism was a reaction to what was perceived as continual humiliation of Turkey by the Europeans because of its backwardness and its resistance to change. Kemalism envisioned a Turkey so completely transformed that there would be no need for the Europeans to criticise Turkey, since Turkey under Kemalist reforms had embraced everything European.

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<sup>56</sup> Bahadıroğlu, Y. (2008) "Biz Osmanlı Terbiyesi Aldık, Düşene Vurmamız!" *Moral Dünyası*, no. 52.

<sup>57</sup> Enver (1989) *Kendi Mektuplarında Enver Paşa*, Ş. Hanioglu (ed.), İstanbul: Der Yay., p. 77, quoted in Kieser, H. L. (2008) *Türklüğe İhtida: 1870-1939 İsviçre'sinde Yeni Türkiye'nin Öncüleri*, İstanbul: İletişim Yay., pp. 180-81.

Coming back to the hegemonic dimension of the Orientalist discourse, the discourse was so effective and convincing because it rested on the stark comparison of the level of advancement between Europe and the Ottoman Empire. Ziya Paşa (1829-1880), in his famous couplet expressed the difference eloquently:

‘I have travelled through the Abode of Blasphemy, and I saw developed lands and many mansions,

I have travelled through the Abode of Islam, and all I saw was ruins.’

When one reads, for example, what a western observer had to say on the state of the mosques in Cairo dating back from the Mamluk times, the parallels in the imagery are remarkable: ‘There is the rounding and generally beautiful dome, and the lovely minaret, and all beside is that ‘dust to dust’ which might be inscribed over as well as within the whole Ottoman Empire.’<sup>58</sup>

There was admission on the Turkish side not only on the level of material advancement Europe had attained, but on the level of European social and individual integrity. When the Islamist poet Mehmed Akif visited Berlin during World War I, he made the following well-known comparison between Europe and Turkey: ‘The way they conduct their affairs is like our religion, and their religion is like the way we conduct or affairs.’ He was referring to the *simplicity* and *clarity* of the theological tenets of Islam and finding similarities with it and the European ideas of honesty, accountability, and transparency in the political and on the individuals’ relations with others and the society in general. In contrast, when he looked at the Turkish society, he found many faults. In commercial life, people acted dishonestly. Sellers cheated on the buyers and sought excessive profit. Greedy merchants hoarded goods, causing artificial shortages, and then sold at inflated prices. Politics was an arena for endless bickering and personal attacks. Public administrators were corrupt. All of these were manifestations that the Turks had moved away from the true principles of Islam. Akif found similarities with all these dishonesty in the Turkish society and the Christian theology, which he regarded as unnecessarily complex, and the clergy as a selfish, profiteering class.

Being an Islamist, Mehmed Akif would never find fault with the essence of Islam. This is where the westernisers and then Kemalists differed radically. Under the guise of attacking ‘superstitions,’ ‘ignorance,’ and ‘the medieval darkness’ that they associated with the traditional interpretation of Islam, they sought to remove Islam from the public arena and create a secular, positivist society. This ultimately amounted to their embrace of the Orientalist discourse.

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<sup>58</sup> F.W.H. (1854) “Egypt as It is,” *Christian Examiner and Religious Miscellany*, Vol. 52, No. 1, p. 60.



The discussion has brought us to a crucial juncture-one that ties Orientalism with the radical manifestation of the Turkish modernisation project, beginning with the westernisers among the Young Turks, and culminating in Kemalism. Firstly, I would like to make a definition and call Kemalism as the general signifier of the idea that Turkey must adopt the western European political system, values, and lifestyle without any exception, since Western Europe signifies the 'level of modern civilisation,' and its version of modernity has universal applicability. Then, we can call the westernisers of the Young Turk era, who were the forerunners of Kemalists and whose recipes for radical westernization formed the basis of Atatürk's reforms, as Kemalists. This leads us to speak of 'Kemalism before Kemal.'

Historically, calling the westernisers as Kemalists could be considered anachronistic, but analytically, it will help us appreciate the continuities between the westernisers and the Kemalists proper. This categorization will also help us overcome the Kemalist rhetoric of rupture and enable us to situate Kemalism within the general history of Turkish modernisation as its radical outcome, which antagonised and suppressed all other alternative modernisation proposals. Finally, it will save us from having to repeat 'westernisers and Kemalists' all over the analysis. In doing so, I am in part inspired by Bobby Sayyid's categorization of calling 'all those Muslims who rejected the use of Muslim metaphors, who felt that Islam should not interfere with the state' as Kemalists, which would then include among its members Bourguiba of Tunisia, Abdel Nasser of Egypt, Saddam Hussein of Iraq, Bhutto of Pakistan, and Pahlavi of Iran.<sup>59</sup> Although my analysis is confined to the Turkish case, it keeps Kemalism's influence over the other radical modernizers of the Islamic world within its sight.

The Kemalists agreed with the Orientalist views on the root causes of the backwardness of Turkey. Moreover, they agreed with most of the Orientalist recipes on what the Turks had to do to reform their people, society and state. More importantly, they assumed the Orientalist garb, either consciously or subconsciously, in how they looked at their people and country.<sup>60</sup> On certain levels, this happened by their explicit admission and conscious choice, however, on some other levels, it happened subconsciously without the Kemalists ever noticing that they had become Orientalists themselves in many respects. This is what I call 'Orientalism from within,' or in the terminology of some Turkish scholars, as 'Internalised Orientalism.'

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<sup>59</sup> Sayyid, B. (1994) "Sign O' Times: Kaffirs and Infidels Fighting the Ninth Crusade," in E. Laclau (ed.), *The Making of Political Identities*, p. 269.

<sup>60</sup> Kahraman, H. B. (2005) "Komşuluğun Uzaklığı, Uzaklığın Komşuluğu: Türkiye ve Avrupa (Birliği)" ("The Distance of Neighborhood, the Neighborhood of Distance: Turkey and Europe (Union)"), *Varlık*, December, pp. 7-16.

There has been an increasing trend in the recent scholarship, especially in the Turkish academia, to try to understand Kemalism within the framework of Orientalism. In this respect, Hasan Bülent Kahraman's work deserves special mention. In a series of articles, Kahraman has elaborated on the processes through which Kemalism Internalised the Orientalist discourse.<sup>61</sup> While Kemalism explicitly stated that it did not slavishly imitate 'the west' and it tried to reach a unique synthesis that was appropriate for Turkey, it accepted the universality of modernity with its emphasis on 'civilisation,' or 'contemporary civilisation.' Kahraman then calls Kemalism as an example of 'Internalised Orientalism.'<sup>62</sup>

Hakan Yavuz makes the following observation on the link between orientalism and Kemalism: 'Although Turkey was never colonized, Kemalism's uncritical modernisation project was effectively a voluntary internal colonisation of Turkish society by the imposition of certain simple-minded premises of Orientalism on Islam and Ottoman society.'<sup>63</sup> In another article, Yavuz basically argues that the ruling Kemalist elite who worked within the framework of orientalism constructed Islam as irrational, traditional, precapitalist, and stagnant as compared with a civilised, rational, and modern Europe. 'As a result, since the 1920s, the Republican elite has aimed at Westernizing every aspect of social, cultural, and political life to create a secular and national Republican space with a Westernised identity.'<sup>64</sup> In Christopher Houston's work, the ideal subjects of Turkish-republican discourse as well as their polemical interlocutors are inscribed as a distinctive through the operation of a 'native orientalism.' Houston's verdict is sharp and clear: 'Constituting themselves as civilising shepherds, the elite conceive the people as uncivilised sheep.'<sup>65</sup>

In the remaining part of the chapter, I will consider various discursive elements of the Orientalist view towards Turkey and the Turks, as I have listed them in Figure 1 above. I will then identify the corresponding elements in the Kemalist discourse, and look at the patterns in which the Orientalist hegemony manifested itself.

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<sup>61</sup> Kahraman, H.B. and Keyman, E. F. (1998) "Kemalizm, Oryantalizm ve Modernite" *Doğu Batı*, Vol. 1, No. 2, p. 65; Kahraman, H. B. (2002) "İçselleştirilmiş Oryantalizm, Açık Oryantalizm ve Kemalizm," *Doğu Batı*, Vol. 5, No. 20, pp. 153-180; Kahraman, H. B. (2005) "Komşuluğun Uzaklığı, Uzaklığın Komşuluğu: Türkiye ve Avrupa (Birliği)," *Varlık*, December, pp. 7-16.

<sup>62</sup> Kahraman, H. B. (2002) "İçselleştirilmiş Oryantalizm, Açık Oryantalizm ve Kemalizm."

<sup>63</sup> Yavuz, H. (2006) "Islam and Europeanization in Turkish Muslim Socio-Political Movements", in Timothy A. Byrnes and Peter J. Katzenstein, *Religion in an Expanding Europe*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.225-256

<sup>64</sup> Yavuz, H. (2003) "Opportunity Spaces, Identity, and Islamic Meaning in Turkey", in Quintan Wiktorowicz (ed.) *Islamic Activism, A Social Movement Theory Approach*, Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, pp.270-289.

<sup>65</sup> Houston, C. (2001) *Islam, Kurds and the Turkish Nation State*, Oxford and New York: Berg Publishers, p. 137.

In the literature, Kemalism has been called as an ideology, a tradition, a mentality, even a 'civil religion.' These correspond to different perspectives on Kemalism, coming from different disciplinary backgrounds. For instance, calling Kemalism as a tradition or mentality suits the framework of such social sciences as sociology or anthropology. On the other hand, there are sufficient grounds to argue that most studies on Mustafa Kemal, his reforms, and Kemalism are essentially histories, hence they rather follow the development of events and tell their *story* than focus on the political concepts and theorise about them.

I shall analyse Suna Kili's *Kemalism* as an example at this point.<sup>66</sup> Kili was a political science professor at the Robert College in Istanbul and her book was published in the period after the 1960 coup. Her work follows a narrative outline. She divides the history of Turkey since 1919 into following four periods, and studies the ideology of Kemalism in each period one by one: The period of national struggle (1919-1923), the Atatürk (1923-1938) which roughly overlaps with the one-party rule (1923-1945), the multi-party system (1945-1960), and 'the May 27, 1960 revolution and its aftermath' (1960-present). In a sense, her book tells two parallel and interrelated stories: the history of Turkish Republic and the evolution of the Kemalist ideology through the periods of that history.

The most remarkable aspect of Kili's study is the total absence of relating these two stories to the wider context. From the historical perspective, she never refers to such developments as the rise of fascism in Europe in 1930s or the advent of the Cold War after the World War II, both of which affected Turkey and Kemalism to a large extent. From the ideological perspective, she treats such concepts as republicanism, the role of the parliament, liberalism, democracy, etc, in a static fashion, as if they were not subject to change in the period under consideration. In other words, these concepts are essentially *external* to her analysis, because they are western political concepts. Such an attitude is in perfect harmony with the universalist dimension of Kemalism, and reflects the privileged position accorded to the West, which reflects how the Orientalist discourse has permeated Kemalism.

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<sup>66</sup> Kili, S. (1969) *Kemalism*, Istanbul: Robert College. She then extends her analysis up to 1980 in an article: Kili, S. (1980) "Kemalism in Contemporary Turkey," *International Political Science Review*, Vol. 1, No. 3, pp. 381-404.

## Testing the Boundaries of Europe: The Desire to 'Drive the Turk out of Europe'

The Ottomans or the Turks were not just an ordinary 'enemy' in the sense that defeating the Turks or even taking control of the Ottoman Turkish territories was not enough for the Europeans. There was also a strong desire and longing to 'drive the Turks out of Europe.' The Turks had to be driven out of Europe Napoleon Bonaparte, during his exile years would reflect that 'it would enlighten the world to drive those brutes, the Turks, out of Europe.'<sup>67</sup> A British commentator in 1824 wrote: 'Even the Christian powers were to attempt in our days to drive the Turks out of Europe, it would not be so much because the Turks are infidels, but because they are barbarians; and because their policy, both domestic and foreign, is at variance with our notions of justice and common humanity.'<sup>68</sup> In May 1876, in the escalating tensions towards the Russo-Turkish War, an article in the *Chicago Daily Tribune* talked about a possible Bulgarian revolt against the Turks, and stated that when that revolt eventually happened, 'It would involve a war which could not be settled except upon one condition, -the extermination of the Turks, or at least the blotting out of Turkey from the map of Europe. Such a result would be in the immediate interest of religion, civilisation, and progress, and that result must come in the not distant future.'<sup>69</sup>

*The Times* in 1825 published a story titled 'Plan for Expelling the Turks from Europe,' talking about a book by Baron Valentini, a Prussian general, on the subject.<sup>70</sup> *The Times* article refers to 'the expulsion of the Mussulmans from Europe' as a 'project,' which according to Baron Valentini is 'perfectly practicable.' But the article is not a neutral report on this Prussian general's work; it regards the completion of this 'project' as a 'long-desired event,' and refers to the Ottomans as 'barbarians.' The general's plans involved a carefully planned siege of the Ottoman capital and its eventual conquest. The question which then occupied the general's mind is very important for us: What to do with the Turks after they are defeated? The *Times* story explained, 'If they do not choose to turn Christians, a large army would be necessary to keep in order a fanatical and military population of Turks. This knotty point the author gets over by transporting the Mussulmans to Eski-Sheher, the ancient Dorylaum.'

Firstly, I would like to note that Baron Valentini's solution would be considered 'ethnic cleansing' by today's standards, and perhaps not surprisingly, the term 'ethnic cleansing' was coined on

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<sup>67</sup> Abbott, J. (2005) *The Life of Napoleon Bonaparte*, (facsimile of the 1882 edition), Whitefish, Montana: Kessinger Publication Ltd, p. 273. Furthermore, Napoleon was predicting on the eve of his attack against Egypt, that the end of the Ottoman Empire would come in just 25 years. Karal, E. Z. (1938) *Fransa-Mısır ve Osmanlı İmparatorluğu, 1797-1802*, İstanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi Yay., p. 43 cited in Kürkçüoğlu, Ö. (2004) "The Adoption and Use of Permanent Diplomacy," in A.N. Yurdusev (ed.) *Ottoman Diplomacy: Conventional or Unconventional?*, Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 147.

<sup>68</sup> *Knights Quarterly Magazine* (1824), "Malta During the late War," Vol. III, London: Charles Knight, p. 263.

<sup>69</sup> *Chicago Daily Tribune* (1876) "The Doom of the Turks," 12 May, p. 4.

<sup>70</sup> *The Times* (1825) "Plan for Expelling the Turks from Europe," 18 November, p. 2.

exactly the same lands that Valentini was planning to drive the Turks out of, that is, on the former Ottoman territories in the Balkans during the breakup of Yugoslavia, with reference to the Serbs' actions against Bosniacs, whom the Serbs frequently called 'The Turks.'<sup>71</sup> Secondly, the identification of the Turkish city of Eskişehir (transliterated in the article as 'Eski-Sheher') as ancient Dorylaeum, was significant; the author was making an alien territory familiar to himself this way. Again, we see the dual nature of the relationship with Turkey: the contemporary appearance was so different but when one looked carefully there was a lot of common ground, which manifested itself as shared history in this particular example.

But the most important aspect of the way Baron Valentini phrased his solution to his Turkish problem is the contrast he makes between being 'Christian' and being Turkish or Mussulman, whom he identified as a 'fanatical and military' people. His condition for keeping the Turks on European soil was conversion to Christianity, which would eliminate those negative qualities. Bear in mind that Valentini was writing in 1825. What he identified with Christianity as the defining feature of Europe were called by others on different occasions as being 'civilised,' 'developed,' or 'enlightened,' but would be called later, in a more objective way as being 'modern.' We could say that the Kemalist reforms in Turkey accomplished just what Baron Valentini would specify under the particulars of conversion to Christianity. We could also say that Kemalism substituted the terms 'western' or 'European' in place of Baron Valentini's 'Christian.'

In his memoirs, Arnold Toynbee notes that he was raised in an 'atmosphere of animosity against Islam and against the Turks.' He then continues: 'When Gladstone had called for the expulsion of the Turks from Europe, 'bag and baggage', he had been willing to 'let them go –to Asia where they belong.' ... But twenty years later than the date of Gladstone's celebrated speech, my mother told me that Asia Minor was much too good a country for the Turks.'<sup>72</sup>

### *Bosphorus as the Symbol of the Great East/West Divide*

I would like to discuss another example which I think beautifully illustrates how strong the mental barrier in the Orientalist discourse between Europe and Turkey was. Rev. Robert Walsh, who had worked as the chaplain at the British embassy in the Ottoman capital<sup>73</sup>, in his book *Narrative of a Journey* discussed the growing incursions of Russia against the Ottoman Empire and stated that Russian conquest of the Ottoman capital was imminent and inevitable. He said: 'It is very well known that this is an event which the Turks are expecting; and their anticipations of it are not

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<sup>71</sup> I refer to this point in pages 144-145 below.

<sup>72</sup> Toynbee, A. (1967) *Acquaintances*, London: Oxford University Press, p. 246.

<sup>73</sup> For more information on the life and works of Robert Walsh, see Schiffer, R. (1999) *Oriental Panorama: The British Travellers in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Turkey*, Amsterdam: Rodopi, pp. 406-407.

confined to military preparations. Their great burying-ground lies on the Asiatic shore, ... This is, perhaps, the largest cemetery in the world, being one hour, or three miles in length; and it has increased to its present size in consequence of the extraordinary predilection the Turks of Constantinople entertain for it. They are persuaded they will again be compelled to retire to Asia, whence they came; and they wish their bodies to be laid in a place where Christian infidels cannot disturb them. The great majority, therefore, of those who die in Constantinople, are transported by their friends across the Bosphorus...'<sup>74</sup>

It is true that during the Ottoman times, some people wanted to be buried on the Anatolian shore of the Bosphorus, in the town of Üsküdar, but that did not have anything to do with the fear of a Russian conquest of Istanbul. Firstly, the Anatolian side hosted a sizable population. Üsküdar and Kadıköy were large towns themselves; hence the existence of a large cemetery on the Anatolian side did not automatically prove Walsh's theory.<sup>75</sup>

Secondly, in the Islamic tradition, other factors, such as family tradition or proximity aside, people wished to be buried at a certain cemetery instead of others primarily because of the existence of saints' tombs at that cemetery. In the case of the large cemetery on the Anatolian side, it was known as Karacaahmet Cemetery after the tomb of a saint bearing that name. There was also a Sufi convent near the cemetery.<sup>76</sup>

Equally important was the religious longing for the holy cities of Mecca and Medina. Since pilgrimage was one of the five 'pillars' of Islam, people desired to go on pilgrimage but during the Ottoman times, due to the large distances involved, pilgrimage often meant a long and dangerous journey. Hence, not everyone could become a pilgrim. Since the Ottoman sultans could not perform pilgrimage themselves due to the difficulty of leaving their capital for a long time, they sent a special caravan, called *Surre Alayı*, laden with gifts for the holy places and alms for the poor and needy. The departure of this caravan from the Ottoman capital was celebrated in large scale festivities. After leaving the ancient walled city of Istanbul, the caravan would cross the Bosphorus and land at Üsküdar.

The point that the caravan first set foot on the Anatolian side was considered symbolically as the beginning of the Holy Land, since that was the closest one could get to the Holy Land without

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<sup>74</sup> Walsh R. (1831) *Narrative of a Journey from Constantinople to England*, London: Frederick Westley and A. H. Davis, p. 41.

<sup>75</sup> In 1877, A. Ritter estimated the Muslim population living to the east of Bosphorus ('Anatolian' side of İstanbul, comprising Üsküdar, Kadıköy, etc) as 455 thousand, while he estimated the Muslim population living to the west of Bosphorus ('European' side of İstanbul) as around 285 thousand. Hence the Muslim population on the Anatolian side was much larger than that for the European side. Cited in Behar, C. (1996) *The Population of the Ottoman Empire and Turkey, 1500-1927*, Ankara: TC Başbakanlık Devlet İstatistik Enstitüsü, p. 38.

<sup>76</sup> Haskan, M.N. (2001) *Yüzyıllar Boyunca Üsküdar*, İstanbul: Üsküdar Belediyesi Yay., vol. 2, pp. 667-669; İşli, N. (1995) "Karacaahmet Mezarlığı," *İstanbul Ansiklopedisi*, vol.4, p. 444-447.

leaving the Ottoman capital from sight. Hence, that point was called as *Harem*, meaning the holy. There were many people, who lived all their lives with a burning desire to perform the pilgrimage, but could not complete the journey. Hence, some of those people wished to be buried at the Anatolian side, so that they could make a connection with the Holy Land at least after their death.<sup>77</sup>

Regardless of the origins of the desire of some inhabitants of Istanbul to be buried on the Anatolian side, that desire was far from uniform. Many people wanted to be buried at cemeteries on the European side, too. Chief among them was the Eyüp Sultan cemetery. The saint that gave Eyüp Sultan the status of holiness was the companion of the Prophet Muhammad, Ebu Eyyüb El-Ensari, was buried when he was 'martyred' in one of the sieges of Constantinople during the Umayyad times. The location of his tomb had been lost by the time of Mehmed II's conquest, and it was discovered by the Conqueror's mentor after a spiritual dream. Later a mosque was built next to the tomb, and a large cemetery developed around the site. Many Ottoman notables in late eighteenth and early nineteenth century chose to be buried at Eyüp Sultan, while all Ottoman sultans of the period were buried within the ancient walled city.

When we take into account all these factors, Reverend Walsh's story appears to be some type of 'wishful thinking' on his part. Let us now consider the possibility of a Russian conquest of Istanbul. In that case, why would they let the Turks keep the opposite shores of Bosphorus? There would be no reason at all for them to do so. So, even if the Turks were fearful of an impending Russian conquest, being buried at Üsküdar would not be of much help. There would have been an exodus of living people from Istanbul towards Anatolia, which certainly did not happen at any time.

My point has certainly nothing to do about a hypothetical Russian advance, but it now seems clear that there was a need in the European mind to draw a border between Europe and the Orient, which I referred to above as the 'Great East/West Divide.' That divide was a border; it was a barrier. In its certain incarnations, it served to separate 'civilisation' from 'barbarity,' 'Christianity' from 'Mahomedanism, the religion of the false impostor,' or the Occident from the Orient. And that fateful waterway, known as the Bosphorus, was the embodiment of that divide. It was a convenient geographical separation between Europe and Asia. Unfortunately, that barrier crossed right through the middle of the Ottoman capital physically, and the cultural and civilisational heart of Turkey symbolically.

Walsh was not alone in prophesising on the demise of the Turks. Many Westerners writing on Ottoman Turkey in the nineteenth century were convinced that the days of Turkish Muslim sovereignty over the Ottoman capital, and even Anatolia, were numbered. Charles White, who

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<sup>77</sup> Gürdoğan, E.N. (2008) "Üsküdarı Kabe Toprağı Kılmak," *Birinci Üsküdar Sempozyumu: 23-25 Mayıs 2003 Bildiriler*, Z. Kurşun (ed.), pp. 245-249.

lived in the Ottoman capital for three years in the early 1840s as the correspondent of the *Telegraph* newspaper, was quite certain of this outcome: 'It requires little astrological skill to draw the horoscope of future Constantinopolitan generations, or to divine the fate of Roomelian Turkey ... Yes! ... fifty years cannot elapse ere [sic] travellers will flock to Constantinople to search for relics of Moslem institutions with as much eagerness as they now seek for vestiges of Christian or Pagan antiquities.'<sup>78</sup>

### *'Driving the Turks Out': The Turkish Response*

This long-running European tradition of 'driving the Turks out' rhetoric, which I have identified as an element of Orientalism towards the Turks above, was not something the Turks could ignore and pretend that it was not there. It caused a sense of fear and insecurity among the Turks. Living constantly on the defensive, losing lands continuously and being on a retreat that seemed to keep on and on gave the reform process an urgency, which prevented a calm evaluation of the situation, tended to overemphasise the imminent and apparent aspects over the strategic and underlying dynamics. Reform was a matter of survival, not an option.

The logic was simple and brutal: Turkey should either reform itself, or the Turks would be driven out of Europe. In 1883, the admiral of the Ottoman Navy, Halil Paşa, went to Russia to sign the Edirne Treaty. When he returned, his verdict on the overall situation the Ottoman Empire faced was alarming: 'I have just returned from Russia. I have come to believe more than at any time that if we do not immediately begin imitating Europe, there is no other option for us to return to Asia.'<sup>79</sup>

The urgency of the situation was especially emphasised by the westernisers, who regarded the piecemeal and cautious approach of the Ottoman modernizers as too little too late. Kılıçzade Hakkı defended the need for a total embrace of the west with a warning on this issue: 'We are going to tell the people 'you have been listening to the fanatic adherents, the religious sheikhs, the dervishes, and all you have earned was disappointment.' Now listen to the true religious people of the Koranic truths, who are supporters of the sciences, technology and the principles of liberalism. We will then shout out and explain that if we do not think like Europeans and work like Europeans, they will not tell leave us alone even if we escaped to the poles-not just retreat to

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<sup>78</sup> White, C. (1846) *Three Years in Constantinople; or, Domestic Manners of The Turks in 1844*, 2nd ed., vol. 2, London: Henry Colburn, p. 361.

<sup>79</sup> Kahraman, H.B. and Keyman, E. F. (1998) "Kemalizm, Oryantalizm ve Modernite" *Doğu Batı*, Vol. 1, No. 2, p. 65.



Asia. They will not let us preserve the existence of our holy religion and nation. Today they have thrown us out of Europe, tomorrow they will wipe us off the face of the earth.’<sup>80</sup>

When we look at how events played out after World War I, we see that even the existence of a much reduced Turkey cornered into Anatolia was threatened. The Turkish national liberation war was carried out while the Turkish territories in eastern Thrace and western Anatolia was under Greek occupation, Istanbul was under Allied occupation, the south under Italian, the southwest under French, and the northeast under Armenian occupation. The Sevres Treaty was an attempt to corner the Turks into the steppes of Central Anatolia. The young Turkish Republic’s willingness to forget all this historical baggage and make a fresh start in relations with the Greeks and the European powers was all the more remarkable.

The second lasting effect of this negative European attitude towards the Turks was the duality it caused in how Europe was perceived in Turkey, whose two facets had an uneasy and ambiguous relationship with each other. On the one hand, Europe was seen as the model to be emulated. On the other hand, there was the knowledge that regardless of how hard the Turks tried towards reforming themselves, they would still be considered different by Europe and their progress would be measured by the Europeans with respect to a different set of standards.

According to a frequently quoted example, the French used to issue diplomas to the people from the Orient that carried a special stamp ‘*Bon pour Orient*.’ This showed the French prejudice against the Orientals, who were thought not capable of measuring up to the European standards. Kemalism was a radical attempt to put a final end to this state of affairs in the European-Turkish relations. The Kemalist reforms were carried out with the understanding the Europeans would no longer need to apply ‘*Bon Pour Orient*’ towards the Turks, because there would be no need. However, this Kemalist attempt to change the situation ultimately failed, and a familiar pattern was established in the relations between Turkey and Europe after the end of the one-party rule in Turkey and the passing of the initial euphoria of the Kemalist reforms. From then onwards, Kemalism increasingly adopted a critical attitude towards the west, in parallel with the general Turkish feeling of disappointment towards the west, which crystallised in the allegation that the west was applying ‘double standards.’

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<sup>80</sup> Kılıçzade Hakkı (1914) “Pek Uyanık bir Uyku” *İctihad*, No. 58, 27 March (14 March 1329, in the *Rumi*, or Julian, calendar that was in use at the time).

## **'We Must Work Hard to Deserve This Country'**

I would like to develop another aspect of the Turkish feeling of insecurity that was related to the 'Driving the Turks out' rhetoric: the Turks did not deserve the country they inhabited. In the nineteenth century western travel reports of the Turkish countryside, two major themes emerged. On the one hand, the countryside was described as being in a sorry, crumbling state. The roads were not well maintained and infested with bandits. There were many deserted villages. Many fields lied fallow. The peasants were all poor. On the other hand, the western observers were struck by the endless stretches of fertile land with the great potential that lied undeveloped in the countryside. Many asked the question: 'What would this land look like if it was in the hands of Christian or European people?' The answer was the land would be instantly transformed. It would become a piece of heaven on earth.

Thomas Trotter, an American who travelled through Anatolia in the early 1840s had the following observations in this regard: 'No part of the world that I have seen offered a finer soil or better capabilities for cultivation than many districts which I passed on this route. But these fertile territories are depopulated and running to waste; and the inhabitants, surrounded by nature's best gifts, are in a deplorably degraded condition, destitute of the comforts of civilised life. What a picture of prosperity, what a perfect Paradise would this land exhibit, were it in the possession of our industrious and enterprising countrymen!'<sup>81</sup> In similar fashion, a *Times* special correspondent during the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78 exclaimed 'Administered by Englishmen, what a Paradise would Turkey be!'<sup>82</sup>

An American geography book, after making the two observations described above that Turkey had a great potential that was currently wasted, found the ultimate fault with 'the chilling hand of despotism has checked the efforts of industry, and reduced many of the most fertile tracts, almost to a desert.'<sup>83</sup>

Throughout the nineteenth century, some proposals were circulated about the settlement of European migrants in Turkey.<sup>84</sup> At the beginning, the Ottoman Empire seemed enthusiastic on

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<sup>81</sup> Trotter, T. (1846) "Travel and Adventures of Thomas Trotter," *Robert Merry's Museum*, Vol. 11, No. 6, p. 164. Trotter's travelogue was serialized in the magazine that ran for more than 2 years. Here I have limited my examples to one part of this long-running series. The fact that *Robert Merry's Museum* was a magazine for American children does not diminish its value. For more information, see Pflieger, P. A. (1987) "A Visit to 'Merry's Museum'; Or, Social Values in a Nineteenth-Century American Periodical for Children." Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Minnesota. A revised version of the text is available online at the author's personal website: <http://www.merrycoz.org/papers/diss/MM00.HTM> (Accessed 29 September 2008.)

<sup>82</sup> *The Times* (1877) "The Din of War (From our special correspondent)" 25 June, p 8.

<sup>83</sup> Ramsay, D. (1819) *Universal History Americanized*, Vol. II, Philadelphia, PA: M. Carey and Son, p. 106.

<sup>84</sup> See for example, Fletcher, J. P. (1850) *Notes from Nineveh, and Travels in Mesopotamia, Assyria, and Syria*, London: Henry Colburn, p. 94. Though the title refers to mostly lands in modern Syria and Iraq,

this issue, too. However, they soon realised that such a settlement would amount to nothing but colonisation. In the 1850s the Ottoman administration passed a resolution on the settlement issue, in which the Ottoman Empire appeared to welcome all settlers, however when examined in detail, the resolution was designed to make the realisation of such prospects virtually impossible. The railway proposals later in the century were always coupled to designs for economic influence zones as well as the possibility of European settlement along the railways in the fertile areas.

This idea that the Turks did not deserve their country was reflected in the Kemalist discourse. Kemal Atatürk's warning to this effect adorns the walls of many public buildings, especially the military barracks: 'Those nations who do not work, who do not get tired, who do not produce, are first condemned to lose their dignity, then their freedom, and finally their future.' On another occasion, Atatürk stated the competition among the nations in terms of social Darwinism or the 'survival of the fittest' idea of evolution: 'Uncivilised nations are condemned to get stamped under the feet of the civilised.' In the 1920's and 1930's the Kemalist discourse emphasised the need to work hard, expend energy and effort to improve the material conditions, eradicate poverty, and enlighten people. 'We must work hard' became the mantra of Kemalism, in the implicit admission that the contemporary level was not sufficient and it had to be increased to a higher level.

Both the Orientalist and Kemalist discourses placed the ultimate blame on the backward and undeveloped status of the countryside, just like in many other topics, to the existence of an Oriental Despot as the head of the polity. Thomas Trotter expressed this logical inference eloquently: 'But what avails human industry and enterprise, under the sway of an Oriental despot, who, by a single stroke of his pen, or word from his august lips, can command the field to lie untilled, and cover the land with barrenness and desolation? Such are the fruits of tyranny.'<sup>85</sup>

### **Ottoman Sultan as the 'Oriental Despot'**

In many treatises of the Ottoman Empire, various illustrations of the decay and impending collapse of the Ottoman system were always tied to the fact that the Ottoman sultan was the perfect example of an 'Oriental Despot.' Correspondingly, the Ottoman political system was called 'Oriental Despotism,' which was positioned as the exact opposite of the western European

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Fletcher refers to the lands for which he made his proposal for European settlement as 'the once fertile and productive regions of Asiatic Turkey.' Also Spencer, C. (1855) *Turkey, Russia, the Black Sea, and Circassia*, London: George Routledge & Co., pp. 120-121.

<sup>85</sup> Thomas Trotter (1846) "Travel and Adventures of Thomas Trotter," *Robert Merry's Museum*, Vol. 11, No. 6, p. 164.

political system. The Oriental Despot was a ruler, the sultan, whose rule was bound by nothing but his own whim. The sultan could do anything he pleased. He could not be checked by any power or authority, since they all emanated from his person. Whatever he decreed was law, therefore nothing he ordered could be illegal. He could order the execution of anyone he did not like, and this created a perpetual state of fear and terror throughout the country.

Under this picture, the non-Muslims in the Ottoman Empire were the most helpless victims. The political status of the non-Muslim groups under Ottoman rule was frequently likened to slavery. Theirs was a double slavery. Firstly, they were slaves of the Oriental Despot, like all his subjects, including the Muslims. Secondly, they were slaves of the Muslims or the Turks due to their inferior status. 'Turkish rule debased both masters and slaves.'<sup>86</sup> This rhetoric especially heated up during the rebellions of the non-Muslim groups, for example the Greek rebellion of the 1820s. Authors supporting the Greek cause found the Greeks to possess the essence of higher qualities, which was the legacy of the ancient civilisation to which they were heirs. However, these authors also acknowledged that the 'Greek character' under four hundred years of 'Turkish yoke' had acquired some negative traits, such as being cunning and wily. However, all of these were regarded as the unfortunate devices the Greeks had to develop in order to survive under the Oriental Despotism.

In similar manner, an American observer of Ottoman Turkey at the turn of the twentieth century had the following to say on the plight of the Christians under Ottoman rule: 'For nearly five centuries ... [the Christian people of the Balkans] submitted to the yoke of the Sultan and, like all his subjects, were gradually submerged in political, moral, intellectual and commercial oblivion.'<sup>87</sup>

Interestingly, Abdülhamid II, more than any other Ottoman sultan during the modernisation period, gave the Europeans an excellent opportunity to personify the 'Oriental Despot.' At first, Abdülhamid had accepted the constitutional monarchy and the opening of parliament, but when he suspended the constitution and 'temporarily' put parliamentary sessions on hold, the Europeans took it as a hypocritical act of an Oriental Despot. Later, when he resorted to a heavy-handed rule, it was immediately identified as 'tyranny and oppression' in Europe. He censored the press, silenced the opposition, employed a wide network of spies to follow and control every movement in the country.

The vilification of Abdülhamid in the west was picked up by the Young Turk opposition. Hatred towards Abdülhamid's authoritarian policies dominated the Young Turk rhetoric to such an extent that any rational evaluation became impossible. Remarkably, criticising the Ottoman past through

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<sup>86</sup> *The Times* (1877) "Greece for Greeks!" 14 June, p. 5.

<sup>87</sup> Curtis, W.E. (1903) *The Turk and His Lost Provinces: Greece, Bulgaria, Serbia, Bosnia*, Chicago: Fleming H. Revell Company, p. 14.

Abdülhamid became the standard policy of Kemalism. In this respect, Kemalism stole the Young Turk position and appropriated it as its own, while systematically denying the legacy of the second constitutional period. Abdülhamid's acceptance of the Young Turk demands on 23 July 1908 was celebrated as the Festival of Liberty during the early years of the Turkish Republic. After Kemalism eliminated all opposition, that festival, along with the rich intellectual heritage of the second constitutional period was left to fall into oblivion. Even today, the dissolution of press censorship on 24 July 1908 is celebrated as the Press Day, but it is conveniently forgotten that censorship was revived in 1925 and remained in effect until the end of the one-party rule.

### *Orientalists only understand Brute Force*

Once it is established in the Orientalist discourse that the Orientals have been suffering under Oriental Despotism, a political regime that corrupts both the ruler and the ruled, and strips people off their human dignity, it automatically follows that they can only be ruled by brute force. The Orientals have been made to bow to the capricious whims of their rulers for so long that they are not capable of expressing their own opinions in a free manner. They cannot judge the merits of an administration by the progress such an administration might bring to public services, or economy. If they only respond to brute force, then they can only be ruled by it.

I shall illustrate this point from a British diplomatic report, dated 23 April 1928. Mr. Knox, the British representative in Ankara narrated a story in which Mustafa Kemal quelled a protest at the parliament during the debates in 1924 to abolish Caliphate. Accordingly, during the parliamentary proceedings, 'a white bearded Hodja' protested against an attack on the Caliphate.' In response, Mustafa Kemal, 'the Ghazi,' intervened and directly addressed the protester: 'Hodja Effendi, did you not tell me yourself in Brusa that the Caliphate was a useless institution?' The British diplomat's evaluation of the hodja's response to this unexpected question is revealing: 'The hodja, who had, of course said nothing of the kind, like a *true Oriental* acquiesced, and the motion for the abolition was pushed through a subservient House without difficulty.'<sup>88</sup> My argument is not about how undemocratic Mustafa Kemal's suppression of the opposition was, but rather, about 'true Oriental' as an idealisation that typified the British diplomat's view of the Turks: easily cowed when faced with a superior force. From the perspective of this thesis, the most important aspect of this topic is that the Kemalists, with Mustafa Kemal at the forefront, had embraced this Orientalist archetype of the 'true Oriental.'

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<sup>88</sup> Knox, G. G. (1928) "Mr. Knox to Sir Austen Chamberlain" dated 23 April 1928, British National Archives, India Office Records, IOR/L/PS/11/281, E2117/128/44. The italics are mine.

An anecdote from the parliamentary debates on the abolition of the sultanate in November 1922 tells a similar story. When he saw that there were more opposing voices than he had anticipated, Mustafa Kemal climbed a nearby desk, and made a historic speech: 'It is no longer a question of knowing whether we want to leave this sovereignty in the hands of the nation or not. It is simply a question of stating an actuality, something which is already an accomplished fact and which must be accepted unconditionally as such. And this must be done at any price. If those who are assembled here, the Assembly and everybody else, would find this quite natural, it would be very appropriate from my point of view. Conversely, the reality will nevertheless be manifested in the necessary form, but in that event it is possible that some heads will be cut off.'<sup>89</sup>

Remarkably, this Orientalist view on how to treat the Orientals is still alive and well. In the aftermath of the terror attacks on 11 September 2001, Bernard Lewis, the famous defender of Orientalism against Edward Said, advised the Bush administration to act tough, 'brushing aside concerns that too harsh a retaliation would provoke the Arab street: "In that part of the world," he said, "nothing matters more than resolute will and force."' "<sup>90</sup>

### **Ottoman Administration as Corrupt, Inefficient and Decaying**

In the Orientalist discourse, the Ottoman administration was portrayed as corrupt, inefficient, and decaying, as opposed to the administrations of the European states, which were honest, efficient and progressive. It was alleged that if one needed to have official business done, he had to be prepared to pay bribes to everyone, from the low-ranking door-handlers to the highest office holders, including the ministers or even the grand viziers. Actually, this view was not restricted to the Ottoman Empire; corruption was considered as the hallmark of the Oriental societies, from Morocco to India, from the Ottoman Empire to China, as it was the case for many issues treated in this chapter, but since our focus is the Ottoman Empire and the Turks, my examples and my discussion will be limited within that scope. Bribery was viewed as such a common practice that the Oriental word for bribes, *baksheesh*, had entered the vocabularies of European languages.

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<sup>89</sup> Atatürk, M. K. (1981) *A Speech delivered by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk 1927*, Ankara: Başbakanlık Basımevi, p. 577.

<sup>90</sup> Lemann, N. (2002) "The Next World Order," *The New Yorker*, April 1, 2002, pp: 42-48, Cited in Grandin, G. (2006) "Your Americanism and Mine: Americanism and Anti-Americanism in the Americas," *The American Historical Review*, vol. 111, no. 4, pp. 1042-1066. Available online at: <http://www.historycooperative.org/journals/ahr/111.4/grandin.html> (Last accessed 7 Sep. 2010).

The Kemalist discourse was heavily influenced by the Orientalist discourse in this respect, too. The Ottoman administration was acknowledged to be corrupt, but this was tied to the fact that the Ottoman state was not a national or nationalistic state. According to Kemalists, the allegiance of the people and the public officials during Ottoman times had been to the Ottoman dynasty or the sultan, which was a personal and corruptible tie, whereas the allegiance under the republic was to the Turkish nation, which represented a lofty ideal. The Kemalists regarded the Ottoman sultans as corrupt and greedy rulers, who did not think of anything but their personal interests. Then, in accordance with the maxim 'a fish begins stinking from the head,' it was to be expected that all public officials would become corrupt.

Another important evaluation of the Ottoman administration in the Orientalist discourse was its inefficiency. The Ottoman Turks were portrayed as a warlike, militaristic population, who had conquered and then ruled by brute force. The Turks were considered to possess so little mental capacity that it was impossible for them to run a complex state machinery. Tax collection, public finances, appointments of public officials, record keeping were then all assumed to take place without any systematic mechanism, in a completely haphazard, unprincipled, and personal way.

This negative portrayal of the Ottoman public administration reached the level of absurdity to such an extent that the sheer continuation of Ottoman existence became a paradox to explain. If the Ottoman Turks were so incapable of running an empire, then how could that empire survive at all? The answers then left the sphere of reason and logic, and began calling 'pure luck' to aid.

The Ottoman Empire was considered to be on a long decline, which supposedly began at the end of the sixteenth century. The problem with calling such a *longue duree* as a period of decline is self-explanatory. The concept of 'decline' refers to an unnatural speed of events in the life of a political entity. If a state is said to be declining, one expects it to fall apart, dissolve, or simply die, in a *comparatively short* period of time. After all, as Keynes remarked, 'In the long run, we are all dead.' A 'decline' that takes centuries, by definition, cannot be a decline.

The following well-known anecdote of Fuad Paşa, who was one of the influential Ottoman statesmen during the Tanzimat period, illustrates a perceptive criticism of the 'long decline' theory. Fuad Paşa was conversing with Comte de Montauban de Palitan during Sultan Abdulaziz' visit to France on the occasion of the 1866-67 Exhibition. They disagreed on the condition of the Ottoman Empire. Comte de Montauban claimed the Ottoman Empire was weak and crumbling. Fuad Paşa opposed: 'The strongest state in the world is the Ottoman Empire, because for three centuries, you, from the outside, and we, from the inside, have been trying to destroy this state,

but neither of us could succeed in this!’<sup>91</sup> It should be noted though that besides an attempt to bolster the Ottoman pride, Fuad Paşa’s statement included an implicit admission that the Ottomans did not do a good job of strengthening their state and lagged behind Europe in development.

In 1933, a Kemalist journalist, Zeki Mesut praised the successes of the young republic which had been accomplished in just ten years.<sup>92</sup> He asked the rhetorical question, ‘Didn’t the Turkish nation work previously?’ and answered ‘It did... However, apart from what it could keep in his hands from the product of its hard toils, the rest would pass on to the palace and a group of parasites surrounding the palace, and would be spent according to their whims and desires. Moreover, the earnings of the nation would not suffice for their excesses and debauchery, and a lot of debts would be incurred from abroad at great expense to the nation, because that government had not been a national and true government. It did not keep the interests of the nation above its own interests. The men of the palace and the cabinet preferred double palaces for themselves to building a school or a road. What could be expected from men of this mentality, who relied on the selfish sultan and who considered it their foremost duty to serve the capricious whims of the sultan?’

### **Christian Europe vs. Muslim Turks: Islam and Koran as Barrier to Turkish Progress**

In the nineteenth century, Christianity was considered as one of the defining characteristics of Europe. Often times, it would be referred to as ‘Christian Europe.’ This simplification answered the question of what separated Turks from Europeans: they were Muslim and not Christian, which prevented them from having all the good qualities that were associated with being European.<sup>93</sup> If what made Europe civilised and developed was the fact that it was Christian, what made the Turks barbarous and backwards must have been the fact that they were Muslim. This line of reasoning concluded that as long as the Turks remained Muslim, they would not be able to change and develop. Some even equated the reform process with ‘Christianization of Turkey’ and

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<sup>91</sup> Karal, E.Z. (1983) *Osmanlı Tarihi: 7. Cilt Islahat Fermanı Devri (1861-1876)*, Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, p. 129.

<sup>92</sup> Zeki Mesut (1933) “Yaratıcı Cumhuriyet,” *Hakimiyeti Milliye*, 8 September, p. 1.

<sup>93</sup> For example, Edward Said devotes several pages of his book *Orientalism* to Jacques Waardenburg’s study of Orientalism, *L’Islam dans le miroir de L’Occident*. Waardenburg ‘examines five important experts as makers of an image of Islam’ and in the work of each eminent Orientalist he studies, ‘there is a highly tendentious-in four cases out of five, even hostile-vision of Islam’. Said, E. (1978) *Orientalism*, p. 209.



related the observed changes in the country to 'the decrease of fanaticism among the Turks, and the corresponding increase of the influence exercised over them by the Christians.'<sup>94</sup>

In the run-up to the Crimean War, Sir Earl Grey criticised the British government's policy of supporting the Ottoman Empire. He dismissed the idea that Ottoman reforms could succeed at all. For him, as long as the Turks remained Muslim, they could not progress:

'My lords, what are the Turks, and what is the Turkish power? ... We know that a horde of fierce barbarians, endeavouring to spread by the sword a false religion, have conquered one of the finest regions of the earth. We know that under their despotic oppression for four centuries the population have been ground down, and civilisation and improvement have been delayed. ... We are told that now a great improvement has taken place, that the character of the Turks is altogether altered, and that they are no longer that which we formerly knew them to be. I cannot see any evidence that such is the case. For my own part, I believe that any real change for the better in the character of the Turks is utterly impossible while they continue to be Mahomedans.'<sup>95</sup>

In the autumn of 1887, a lively debate raged on the reader letters section of the *Times* newspaper for more than 3 months. The debate was triggered by a speech of Canon Isaac Taylor at Wolverhampton Church Congress, where Taylor claimed that 'in Asia and Africa, Islam, as a missionary religion, is more successful than Christianity, and that our efforts to convert the Mahomedans have failed.'<sup>96</sup> This observation immediately caused an uproar and many reader letters were published in the *Times* against Isaac Taylor. The issue quickly evolved into a comparison between Christianity and Islam. A female reader took Taylor's presentation as a defence of Islam, and protested, since Islam 'places all its women in the most degrading position as mere toys or slaves, and regards them as not having souls worth praying for-if, indeed, it really believes them to have any-for this is the practical outcome of its teaching.'<sup>97</sup>

Among the numerous reader letters, Cannon Malcolm Maccoll's stands out. In defence of the missionary work, Maccoll argued that 'rapidity of propagation no more proves the superiority of a religion than it proves the superiority of an animal; it may even, in the one case as in the other, afford presumptive evidence of a low type of life.'<sup>98</sup> He then attributed 'human progress' of the 'modern civilisation' to Christianity, as opposed to Islam, which 'has been an unmitigated curse to the lands and peoples where it has ruled.' But the crucial point of his analysis was his claim that

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<sup>94</sup> *The Eclectic Review* (1854) "The Southern Seat of War," Vol. 8, p. 278.

<sup>95</sup> *The Times* (1854), "Parliamentary Intelligence. House of Lords, Tuesday, Feb. 14. The Eastern Question," 15 February, p. 5.

<sup>96</sup> Taylor, I. (1887) "Islam," *The Times*, Letter to the Editor, 26 October, p. 4.

<sup>97</sup> H.M.M.H. (1887) "To the Editor of the Times," *The Times*, 7 November, p. 13.

<sup>98</sup> Mac Coll, M. (1887) "To the Editor of the Times," *The Times*, 17 November, p. 13.

‘what Mahomed did was to erect, for all who accept the Koran, an eternal barrier against any human progress... Beyond that barrier Islam has never advanced and never can.’ This representation of Koran as a ‘barrier’ was common, and it was just one of the many manifestations of the East/West barrier that I have talked about earlier. For the people on the other side of the great divide, getting rid of Koran was seen as one of the preconditions for progress.

### *The Orientalist Recipe: Shut the Koran, Open the Women*

The main problem with Islam was seen with the Muslim belief that the Koran was the literal word of God, which meant that the rulings of Koran were fixed, rigid, unchangeable and inviolable. The Koran was seen as the main barrier towards progress and enlightenment in the Muslim world. Therefore, if Muslims wanted to change the poor state they were in, they had to get rid of this barrier. An article from the *Times* in 1854 had the following on this matter: ‘The visitor in Constantinople is also at first inclined to believe that a great and voluntary change is at hand, and that a few years will see the Koran shut and the harem opened. Such an opinion is wide-spread in Europe, and perhaps does not want foundation. That there is a general expectation of change among the Turks themselves is certain, and though they detest the idea they might accept it as their fate.’<sup>99</sup>

The phrase ‘the Koran shut and the harem opened’ is significant because it refers to a well-known anecdote of Abdullah Cevdet, who was one of the prominent westernisers. In a famous article in *İctihad*, Abdullah Cevdet related a conversation he had with a Frenchman. When Cevdet asked him what the Ottomans needed to do for progress, the Frenchman replied ‘*Fermez le Coran, ouvrez les femmes!*’ (‘Shut the Koran, and open the women!’) Abdullah Cevdet’s reply ‘why not open both the Koran and the women’ was remarkable in that it pointed out the general direction of the Kemalist attitude towards religious reform. By opening the Koran, Abdullah Cevdet was criticizing the traditional ‘Turkish Islam’ as having moved away from the true essence of the Koranic message. He was clearly inspired by the Protestantism’s emphasis on Holy Scripture. His idea would form the basis of Kemalism’s attempt to reform Islam and create a ‘Turkish Islam’ that was visibly, liturgically, and theologically separate from the ‘Arabic Islam.’

In many of the writings of the westernisers during the second constitutional period, religion was emphasised to be first and foremost a matter of conscience. The desire to limit religion to the private sphere would become one of the hallmarks of Kemalist attitude towards religion. At the same time, Kemalism tried to eradicate Islam completely from the public arena.

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<sup>99</sup> *The Times* (1854) “Turkey. (From Our Own Correspondent,” 18 May, p. 10.

The Kemalist reforms included many acts designed to eliminate the influence of Islam in the Turkish society. The religious schools were banned, the Sufi convents were outlawed, and people were forbidden to wear clothing identified with religious piety. The ban on the prayer calls (*ezan*) in Arabic symbolised the Kemalist attempt of a disassociation with the Muslim community, ummah, in general, and a step towards the creation of a reformed, 'Turkish Islam.'<sup>100</sup>

There is now credible evidence that Mustafa Kemal's designs in the early 1930's amounted to an attempt of religious reformation, loosely modelled on the Protestant reformation. During this period, he received as a gift a biography of Martin Luther, which he carefully read. Now at the presidential library in Ankara, the book was provocatively dedicated 'to the Luther of Islam.'

One of the most significant attempts of Kemalism in this respect was the translation of the Koran into Turkish. Although the history of the Turkish translations and exegesis of the Koran go back to the eleventh or twelfth centuries, Kemalism tried to take an unprecedented step and use the Turkish translation liturgically, which ran counter to the religious practice and sensibilities. Mehmed Akif, the Islamist poet of the national anthem, was commissioned to write the translation, while Elmalılı Hamdi Yazır, a respected religious scholar, was given the task of writing a Koranic exegesis in Turkish. When Mehmed Akif perceived Mustafa Kemal's true intention, which was to use his translation during the prayers, he refused to submit his translation and reputedly burnt it. Afterwards, he would go on a self-imposed exile to Egypt.

In the same period, the Friday sermons were read for the first time in Turkish. The first time a Friday sermon was to be given in Turkish, the imam appeared at the pulpit wearing a tailcoat, which was and still is associated with a distinctively European identity. Today, Friday sermons are given in Turkish, which is about the only success Kemalism could achieve, the liturgical parts of the sermons continue to be recited in Arabic and the preachers certainly never wear tailcoats! In the mid 1930s, some Kemalists went even further and proposed placing seats in the mosques in accordance with the Christian practice. The Kemalist project to create a reformed Islam bearing a distinctly Turkish mark would ultimately fail, but its traumatic effects are still being felt in Turkey. The Orientalist discourse of 'shut the Koran and open the women' still determines the parameters of the debate on Islam in Turkey.

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<sup>100</sup> One of the first tasks of the Democrat Party government after its landslide victory in the 14 May 1950 general elections was to repeal this ban on the prayer calls. It was a symbolic act, with which the DP is still remembered today. After the 1960 coup d'état, some military officers would categorically state that preparations to topple the DP government had first been initiated as a reaction to the removal of this ban. It must be noted that the DP did not make prayer calls to Arabic as obligatory. It simply removed the ban, leaving the people to pray in any way they wished, and since then there is near universal agreement among those attending the communal prayers at the mosques that prayers calls should be in Arabic. It is remarkable that most of the Kemalists, who call for the reinstatement of the ban and who would like to hear prayer calls in Turkish, do not attend prayers at the mosques at all.

## Turks as Superstitious and Irrational People

In the European eyes, the Turks were a deeply superstitious people. Sometimes, the whole label of superstition was exclusively applied to Islam, but here in this particular context, superstitions were acknowledged to have roots going back before Islam and they were considered to form a body of folk religion and customs. I must stress here that these European views were not specifically directed against the Turks; other Muslim groups, even the eastern Christians were considered in the same light. But the eastern Christians, for example the Greek Orthodox, were at least granted the possibility of progress since they were descended from the ancient Greeks and they contained in their culture and community the essence of the western civilisation.

Miss Jane Pardoe, who visited Istanbul in 1836 while accompanying her father, Major Thomas Pardoe, had reached the following conclusion on the superstitions of the Turks: 'The Turks are strangely superstitious; they cling resolutely to the absurd and wild fancies which have been banished from Europe for centuries; and that, too, with a blindness of faith and a tenacity of purpose, quite in keeping with their firm and somewhat dogged natures.'<sup>101</sup> She then goes on to list a lot of superstitious beliefs and practices, some of which were heavily criticised by the Kemalists, too. One superstition Pardoe mentions is the Turkish obsession with the 'evil eye,' or rather, precautionary measures taken against their ill effects. The 'evil eye' has been discussed by nearly all western observers of the Turkish society.

One superstition she describes is the practice of tying a piece of clothing to the window grills of a saint's tomb, to get rid of an evil curse or disease. Actually, this practice usually involved tying rags to trees, especially magnificent trees or very old ones, since trees were considered sacred in the Pre-Islamic mythology of the Turks.<sup>102</sup> The sight of a tree with countless colourful little pieces of clothing tied to its branches instead of green leaves, swinging in the wind is a powerful image, representing the wishes and prayers of so many people focused on a single tree and embodied in the tied rags. With the veneration of the saints' tombs, the two aspects seem to have been combined and a tree next to a saint's tomb would be the preferred choice for people in a certain locality to tie such rags. Since Pardoe only visited Istanbul, she probably did not see those trees for which there would not be enough space in an urban setting.

Superstitions were one of the topics Kemalists attack the traditional culture in the most vehement way. The prevalence of the superstitions was related to the lack of rational and

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<sup>101</sup> Pardoe, M. (1854) *The City of the Sultan and Domestic Manners of the Turks, with a Steam Voyage up the Danube*, London: G. Routledge & Co., pp. 105-108. On Julia Pardoe, see Pal-Lapinski, P. (2004) *The Exotic Woman in Nineteenth Century British Fiction and Culture: A Reconsideration*, Hanover: University Press of New England, pp. 15-17.

<sup>102</sup> I have been told that this practice is not restricted to modern Turkey but it also exists in many other parts of the 'Greater Middle East' region, from Iran to the Caucasus and Central Asia.

scientific thinking in the Turkish society. A practice condemned by the Kemalists involved the use of prayers to heal diseases. There were people, who specialized in the practice and who often made a living out of it. These people were usually religious scholars or people known in their circles for their piety. Since it was customary to blow the exhaled air towards the sick when a prayer was finished, they were commonly called in Turkish as *üfürükçü* (air blower). Often times, these practices exceeded religious dimensions and actually became folk healing. Although in Turkey, it almost never took the form of stubborn refusal towards any help from modern medicine, as is the case for some Amish communities in America, Kemalism usually denied the cultural and mythological aspects of these folk healing practices and used them as a weapon in its rhetorical struggle against the social aspects of Islam. This was part of Kemalism's programme of secularisation in Turkey.

The Turks (or the Orientals in general) were superstitious because they were ignorant of the scientific and technological advances of the west, and they were not used to applying the principles of reason and logic in their thinking. The observations of Mr. Thompson, an American missionary who had been to Egypt and Palestine in 1834, illustrate some of these points beautifully.<sup>103</sup> He witnessed an earthquake while at Ramla, a Palestinian town, which caused panic among the locals. According to the Muslim judge, the *cadi*, the earthquake happened because the earth had seven foundations, the sixth being 'a great rock and the seventh the *horn of the great ox*. When the ox becomes fatigued he changes the rock from one horn to the other, and that caused the shaking. The *cadi* was evidently sincere, and delivered his opinion with great gravity. Such is the ignorance which prevails even in the higher circles of society.' The American missionary's account is full of details on how the locals had extreme and irrational fear and panic, while he was calm and steady.

Another element in his account is the contrast between his understanding of religion and that of the locals. After one of the tremors, he took his Bible and retreated to a cemetery for reflection and prayer, but the locals misinterpreted his behaviour and assumed he was trying to predict if there would be a bigger earthquake, and a crowd gathered around him. For him, religion was first and foremost a matter of faith and inspiration, whereas for the locals, Muslims and Orthodox Christians alike, religion was almost like a practice of magic, a key to the supernatural world beyond reason and logic. He wore simple clothing, which was objectionable to a Greek orthodox priest he met, who argued that he had to wear the priest garb so that people could easily recognise him as a holy man and show him respect.

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<sup>103</sup> Thompson (1835) "Syria and the Holy Land. Extracts from the Journal of Mr. Thompson," *The Missionary Herald, Containing the Proceedings of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions*, Vol. 31, No. 3, pp. 85-92.

Similar sentiments were expressed by Kemalists too. They blamed the religious men in the later ages of Islam with deceiving the people for their personal gain. They vilified the traditional understanding of religion, in which people feared God more than they loved him, and in which people only invoked or prayed God when they needed a solution to a personal problem. The Kemalists insisted that there was no clergy in Islam and accused the Islamic scholars with interfering between the people and God—a relationship that must have been strictly personal and confidential. In the novels of the early Republican period, the Islamic scholar characters were mostly portrayed in negative light, as greedy, ignorant, selfish people. One of Atatürk's reforms banned all religious scholars, Muslim and non-Muslim alike, to wear their religious garbs out in public, except the heads of the respective hierarchies (Greek Orthodox and Armenian patriarchs, the chief rabbi, and for the Muslims, the president of the Religious Affairs, who was strangely enough a public official).

It is not a coincidence that when Atatürk emphasised the central position of science and rationality in the new thinking in Turkey, he deliberately used religious references. His famous declaration in this respect, which is often inscribed on the school walls, is: 'The truest guide in life is science and technology.'<sup>104</sup> The word he used for guide is *mürşid*, which is of Arabic origin, and it was customarily used to for Sufi masters, who were spiritual guides to their followers, *mürid*. There were many people who claimed that they were a guide, but the important point was to find a 'true guide.' The first thing a truth seeker in the Sufi path had to do was to make sure his guide was a true guide. Hence, Atatürk was declaring all religious scholars and Sufi masters as false guides and replacing them and their teachings with science and rationality.

Another frequently quoted saying of Atatürk is 'The *tekkes* (Sufi convents) should be closed down at once. The Turkish Republic has the power to provide guidance in every faculty. None of us needs the convents' guidance. We take power from civilisation, science, and technology. We do not recognise anything else.'<sup>105</sup>

On another occasion, Atatürk declared the importance of civilisation in his eyes with a mystical language taken from the Sufi literature: 'Dear friends, gentlemen, and the nation, know this well that the Turkish Republic cannot be a country of sheiks, dervishes, truth seekers (*mürid*), and those who lost themselves in mystical ecstasy. The most correct and the truest order (*tarikat*, Sufi order) is the order of civilisation. I do not know if we could claim a link with the use of mystical

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<sup>104</sup> Actually, the exact quotation is this: 'The truest guide in the world for everything, for civilisation, for life, for success is science and technology.' Atatürk, M. K. (2006) "Samsun Öğretmenleriyle Konuşma, 22.IX.1924" *Atatürk'ün Söylev ve Demeçleri*, vol. 2, Ankara: Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi, pp. 202-203.

<sup>105</sup> Atatürk, M. K. (2006) "Kastamonu'da İkinci Bir Konuşma, 30.VIII.1925" *Atatürk'ün Söylev ve Demeçleri*, vol. 2, Ankara: Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi, pp. 224-225.

language for the exaltation of science and rationality and the eventual veneration of Atatürk reaching mystical and mythical dimensions.

In this respect, I would like to mention Mine Kırıkkanat's criticism of the contemporary manifestation of Kemalism as 'veneration of Atatürk,' in an article published in 2000 in *Radikal* daily.<sup>106</sup> An outspoken Kemalist and critique of the current AKP government, living in Paris, Kırıkkanat claims that all religions throughout history had an element of violence in them, but 'Islam is currently more oppressive than others since it has included the element of violence 'into its software' and since its dogmas are not debateable.' She then regards the erection of the Atatürk busts and sculpture everywhere as another manifestation of the 'Shamanist sanctification,' whose earlier examples included tying rags to trees.

### *Irrationality as an Oriental Habit of Mind*

In the Orientalist discourse, the Oriental people are considered to possess an inherent irrationality, which is sometimes depicted as being childish. A British diplomatic report on the general situation in Turkey in 1927 referred to the difficulty of establishing relations with the new administrators of Turkey in Ankara. Mr. Knox, the British representative at Ankara, and the author of the report, reasoned that it was partly due to the lack of experience on their part, having inherited the powers to rule the country just a few years ago; it was partly due to their mistrust of the British. However, there was a deeper and more fundamental reason for this difficulty: 'One is frequently confronted, too, in spite of the vaunted Westernism of the day, by so Oriental a habit of mind that, of the conclusions one draws from association with Turks, those that on the surface appear the most logical and natural are often those that call for the most searching scrutiny.'<sup>107</sup>

William Eleroy Curtis, an American journalist who recorded his observations on Turkey at the turn of the twentieth century, had the following to say for the Ottoman Turkish administration during the reign of Abdülhamid II: 'History teaches that political problems in Turkey cannot be solved by the same rules that apply to other countries. The Sultan and his ministers are not to be considered as logical or rational beings.'<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Kırıkkanat, M. G. (2000) "Din ve Büyü" ("Religion and Magic") *Radikal*, 22 May.

<sup>107</sup> Knox, G.G. (1927) "Memorandum by Mr. Knox," dated 20 June 1927, British National Archives, India Office Records, IOR/L/PS/11/231, E2711/257/44.

<sup>108</sup> Curtis, W.E. (1903) *The Turk and His Lost Provinces: Greece, Bulgaria, Servia, Bosnia*, Chicago: Fleming H. Revell Company, p. 19.

## Irrationality of the Turks or Incomprehension of the Orientalists?

In this section I would like to discuss three examples at some depth, to argue that the Orientalist generalization about the Turks being irrational was rather a sign of the overbearing confidence of the Orientalists, or the westerners in general, about the supremacy of the Western science, technology and rationality.

### *Olive Cultivation, Turkish Peasants and a French Expert's Observations*

The first example is a report of the French Foreign Ministry in 1899 regarding the province of İzmir in western Anatolia, which has been analysed by Mahmut Mutman:

'Although far from being very enlightened in matters of farming, the peasant of the interior regions is, nevertheless, less ignorant regarding our methods of cultivation; little by little, he is giving up his ancient working habits and is often willing to adopt newer and more profitable ones. Of course we are far from seeing all the land being farmed, and all the old errors given up. To quote only one, not very important, example, the methods of picking olives at present being used in the south of France are still unknown in these regions, and the olives are still struck down with long sticks. The result is that, since the following year's shoots are already sprouting at the moment when the fruit of the current year is ready for picking, both fruit and shoots are struck down simultaneously, with the same blow of the stick, and one year's crop out of two is thus gratuitously lost.'<sup>109</sup>

The French diplomat, or rather, the agricultural expert, *observes* how the Turkish peasants are harvesting the olives, and correctly notes that their method will result in a reduced crop next year. The French expert has no plausible, logical explanation for their behaviour, and then he quickly concludes that the Turkish peasants must be acting in an *ignorant, irrational* way, which has not changed since time immemorial, and which looks to stay unchanged in a foreseeable future. At this crucial point, Mutman intervenes and reminds us that the French expert has, in a sleight of hand, forgotten to examine the causal relationship between a reduced crop and the peasants' *interest*. Mutman then asks: 'What if the peasants are trying to escape from certain obligations that a bountiful harvest would bring to them, and that was precisely why they *wanted*

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<sup>109</sup> French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Report on Smyrna for 1899, vol. 57, text reproduced in Issawi, C. (1966) *The Economic History of the Middle East, 1800–1914: A Book of Readings*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, p. 229; Quoted by Mutman, M. (2003) "Şarkiyatçılık / Oryantalizm," *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasal Düşünce, Cilt 3: Modernleşme ve Batıcılık*, U. Kocabaşoğlu (ed.), İstanbul: İletişim Yay., p. 195. Mutman quotes the same passage, without the accompanying analysis, in a footnote of an earlier article, where he argues that 'the whole process of Orientalization of the Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth century is the othering of the Ottoman peasant's power-knowledge as backward.' Mutman, M. (2001) "On Empire," *Rethinking Marxism*, vol. 3, no. 3-4 (Fall/Winter 2001), p. 54.



to get one year's worth of crop every two years?' If this was indeed the peasants' *rationale*, it would hardly make them irrational beings. The possible explanation put forth by Mutman looks quite similar to the situation in Britain, where many people do not take slightly higher paying jobs to stay in their current tax bracket, or simply refuse to work at all in order to keep their benefits.

There might be other *explanations* for the peasants' behavior as well. If we look at the olive cultivation a bit closely, the very first thing we learn is that it takes two (sometimes three) years for an individual olive to grow from a flower to a fruit, hence at the harvest season there will be some sprouts which will only mature next year. This leads to large fluctuations in the crop from an olive tree from one year to the next. Even today, olive cultivation manuals note that 'olive trees tend to be alternate bearing: heavy crops one year are usually followed by light crops the next year.'<sup>110</sup> Under these circumstances, it could well be a good strategy to purposefully damage the sprouts during the harvest, since they would yield a 'light crop' anyway. This would also give the olive tree a year's respite to recover. In any case, pruning is a well known technique, and to an uninitiated eye, it might look like intentionally harming the plant or tree, but when done expertly, pruning makes a positive contribution to plant growth and yields, which is valid for the olive tree, too. Hence, the peasants might well be aiming for a two-year cycle in which they would get a 'heavy crop' one year and 'no crop' next year, instead of getting a 'less-than-heavy crop' one year and a 'light crop' next year. At the end of these two years, their technique, which the French expert found faulty, could very well have increased their yields.

The French expert is operating within the modern capitalist discourse—a hegemonic discourse—which posits that the economic activities are solely driven by a desire to maximise profit. In the case of olive cultivation, this would require deriving the maximum yield from a given olive tree. In any case, we come to Mutman's conclusion that the French expert is completely overlooking the possibility that 'the peasants might have another relationship with olive cultivation and nature [another 'mode of production,' to use the Marxist terminology], that is, the possibility of *his ignorance*.'

#### *Knowledge as Power: A Turkish Official's Reputed Ignorance of Statistics and Information*

I would like to discuss a colourful story similar to the one above, discussed by the Turkish author Düccane Cündioğlu in a newspaper column.<sup>111</sup> *The Modern Researcher*, one of the best known

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<sup>110</sup> Vossen, P.M. (2007) *Organic Olive Production Manual*, Oakland: University of California Agricultural and Natural Resources, p. 11.

<sup>111</sup> Cündioğlu, D. (2001) "'Musul Kadısı"'nın zaviyesinden Karadeniz'de Nuh Tufanı" *Yenişafak*, 2 February 2001. Available at: <http://yenisafak.com.tr/arsiv/2001/subat/02/dcundioglu.html> (Last accessed 6 September 2010)

manuals on how to conduct research and how to write a PhD thesis in particular, by Jacques Barzun and Henry F. Graff, begins with the colourful story of a clueless Turkish official, who sent the English archaeologist Layard a letter in reply to the latter's request for some information. Layard, in turn, had begun his 'once-famous book on the Middle East' with this letter:

'My Illustrious Friend and Joy of My Liver!

'The thing you asked of me is both difficult and useless. Although I have passed all my days in this place, I have neither counted the houses nor have I inquired into the number of the inhabitants; and as to what one person loads on his mules and the other stows away in the bottom of his ship, that is no business of mine. But, above all, as to the previous history of this city, God only knows the amount of dirt and confusion that the infidels may have eaten before the coming of the sword of Islam. It were unprofitable for us to inquire into it. O my soul! O my lamb! Seek not after the things which concern thee not. Thou camest unto us and we welcomed thee: go in peace!'

Barzun and Graff, the authors of this book on how to conduct research to gather information, conclude: 'This public servant obviously made no annual report-those were the good old days. Note the three things he so courteously declined to provide: vital statistics, business reports, and history.' We see yet another manifestation of the West-East barrier here. In the West, public officials are expected to make decisions on the basis of accurate and reliable information, because they are honest, hardworking, scientifically minded westerners. If they do not perform their duties, people will complain, and they will quickly be removed from office. Things, on the other hand, are completely different in the Orient. Time moves at a much slower pace. The public officials spend their day smoking and just being lazy, and this does not cause a public cry because, well, everybody in the Orient is doing the same thing! Not surprisingly, then, Ernest Renan referred to the same letter Layard used in his book in a conference in 1883, and described the Turkish official as 'resting in a resigned ignorance.'<sup>112</sup> We will now see that in this particular example, the Orientalist view does not hold up to close scrutiny.

Firstly, the claim that the Turkish official did not collect statistical information is simply not true. From the earliest times, the Ottoman Empire had been a bureaucratic state with a highly developed administrative and financial organisation, where records were meticulously made and recorded. Today, the Ottoman Archives in İstanbul is one of the most extensive document repositories in the world, with the total number of documents and registers reaching 150 million.<sup>113</sup> In the nineteenth century, the first Ottoman census was completed in 1831, in which all Muslim and non-Muslim males were counted throughout the empire. According to the eminent Ottoman historian Stanford Shaw, 'the Ottomans did develop a reasonably efficient

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<sup>112</sup> Renan said, in French: '*le but de l'humanité, ce n'est pas le repos dans une ignorance résignée.*'

<sup>113</sup> *Osmanlı Arşivi Rehberi* (2010) İstanbul: Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Gn. Md., p. XXVII.

system for counting the empire's population only a quarter century after census procedures were introduced in the United States of America, Great Britain, and France.'<sup>114</sup> In 1835, a separate Census Department was established under the Ministry of the Internal Affairs to compile and keep census records.

Besides population records, however, the Ottoman authorities had been conducting empire-wide surveys for taxation purposes since early fifteenth century. The *tahrir defterleri* registers are the best known results of these surveys, which considered the peasant family (hearth, or *hane*) and the standard farm plot (*çift*) as the basis of taxation, and village by village, province by province, recorded all the agrarian taxable income sources. The counterpart of the *tahrir* registers in the nineteenth century was *temettüat* registers, which were even more detailed, down to the number of cattle and sheep found at each household. Each register covered a village, a town, or a county and today there are more than 17 thousand such registers at the Ottoman archives. The Orientalist portrayal of the clueless Turkish official, who knows nothing about statistics, then, is clearly off the mark.

The second issue will become clearer once we ask the following question: Why on earth would the Turkish official give the English archaeologist the information he asked for? As the newspaper columnist Dücan Cündioğlu points out, the archaeologist could well have been working undercover for the British intelligence.<sup>115</sup> If we remember that half a century after Layard, Colonel T. E. Lawrence, the famous Lawrence of Arabia, would pose as an archaeologist while he was secretly working for the British government and trying to incite an Arab rebellion, the official's attitude is quite understandable and *rational*. In fact, it is easy to see after a close reading of the official's letter that he was politely declining to give the information Layard had asked for, especially when he, who by the way is the *kadı* (or *qadi*) of Mosul at the time, advises Layard to 'seek not after the things which concern thee not.' Those statistics were *his* concerns and he clearly tried to keep them away from Layard.

I shall conclude this section with a final quote from Barzun and Graff regarding the change that took place in Turkey with the Kemalist reforms: 'The Turkish official of today has dropped his hookah, leaped from his cushion, and is busy counting houses for the Ministry of the Interior. The figures he gathers are then published as government statistics, which other researchers will use for still other reports-from the university student writing a paper on modern Turkey to the foreign businessman who wants to trade in that country.'<sup>116</sup> Now, admittedly, hookah is a fancy way to smoke tobacco, and there is no reason it should require a different treatment than cigarettes or

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<sup>114</sup> Shaw, S.J. (1978), "The Ottoman Census System and Population, 1831-1914" *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 9, p. 325.

<sup>115</sup> Cündioğlu, D. (2001) "'Musul Kadısı'nın zaviyesinden Karadeniz'de Nuh Tufanı'"

<sup>116</sup> Barzun, J. and H. Graff (2006) *The Modern Researcher*, Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing, p. 1.

cigars. Likewise, cushion is furniture and should be considered in the same category as a chair or sofa. These authors could as well have referred to the switchover from the fez to the hat, or from the women's veil to western dress. In any case, these are just appearances, and by themselves, do not tell anything about the mentality. It does not matter if a dictator is wearing a fez or a hat- he is a dictator any way.

### **Turks as Lazy, Fatalistic People with no Motivation for Change and Progress**

There was near unanimous agreement in the accounts of the western observers on the Turkish people's 'laziness.' One author opined that 'Common Turk is, I am afraid, irredeemably lazy. Every village was full of loungers.'<sup>117</sup> Another commentator simply called the Turk as 'a lazy animal,' 'who is a stationary being, hates change, hates civilisation, hates the Europeans, hates all they propose.'<sup>118</sup> The Turkish cities and villages were often described as 'sleepy,' and the general attitude of the people were described in such terms as 'lethargic,' 'lacking in energy and motivation,' or 'resigned.'

This lack of motivation to work hard was usually tied to the people's acceptance of their fate as unchangeable. The Turkish word *kismet* was frequently quoted as the primary determinant of people's attitude towards life. In theological terms, the Turks were deemed to be 'predestinarians.' The Turks accepted what had been 'written on their forehead,' and did nothing to improve their lot. Their universe was static with no room for change. An article in *The Times* in 1935 referred to the need 'break free from *kismet*, that fatalist doctrine which proved itself a cul-de-sac in the realm of ideas as it did in the progress of the Ottoman Empire into Europe' as a necessary condition for the modernising agenda of the 'Kemalist Turk, a newcomer to the ranks of those realists who believe that man's destiny is in his own hands.'<sup>119</sup>

Kemalism wholly embraced this criticism and put the blame on the centuries of hardened religious tradition. Accordingly, Islam in its origin was in perfect harmony with reason, intellect, and logic, however throughout the centuries that true essence was lost over many layers of superstition and bigotry. The religious scholars (*ulema*), the Sufi sheiks (*meşayih*), the prayer leaders (*imam, hoca*), the mystics (*derviş*) were all accused of taking advantage of the common folk's sincerity and using religion to their personal interests. The fatalism of the past was sharply contrasted with the Kemalist belief in mankind's power to determine its destiny.

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<sup>117</sup> *The Times* (1877) 3 August, p. 8.

<sup>118</sup> *The Times* (1859) "Senior's Turkey and Greece," 2 September, p. 9.

<sup>119</sup> *The Times* (1935) "Dress Reform in Turkey," 19 January, p. 13.

When Mustafa Kemal Atatürk powerfully declared in his speech on the tenth anniversary of the republic, 'The Turkish nation is intelligent! The Turkish nation is hard-working!' he was directly aiming at the Orientalist prejudice that fatalism and ignorance was an intrinsic quality of the Turks, but he was also indirectly admitting the same Orientalist perception about the Ottoman past.

One corollary of this notion that the Turks were lazy was that Turkey was a place frozen in time with no prospect for change or progress. The Many observers of the Turkish countryside fondly remarked that the agricultural activities of the peasants were exactly the same as those who lived in the ancient times. In his unpublished memoirs, Morgan Price, who had visited Turkey several times as a correspondent from 1911 onwards, notes that while he was travelling through eastern Anatolia in 1947, he 'saw the Turkish peasants at work in the hot sun, threshing wheat and barley. They were doing it in the same old way they must have done it in the days of ancient Hittites – a board dragged slowly over the ground by oxen and the chaff was separated from the corn by throwing it into the air.'<sup>120</sup> İlber Ortaylı notes that 'in Europe in the eighteenth century, especially due after the travels to the eastern Mediterranean and the Near East, the idea that societies in the rest of world were stagnant and that history formed a vicious circle in those places. We find this idea in the traveller Chardin: 'Asia is lassitude, Europe is continually changing.' Mousnier in 1740 made a statement on behalf of the Paris Academy: 'Europe is a changing world thanks to the developments in its level of knowledge and consciousness, the other regions are in lassitude.'<sup>121</sup>

Today, there is a return to ancient recipes in the organic food movement, and it is quite fashionable to do things 'in the same old way they must have done it in the days of the ancient' Hittites, Greeks, or Romans, but back then, when progress and development were all the rage, they were frowned upon. Apart from the obvious productivity increases such machinery as tractors would bring, they took on special symbolic meaning in the Kemalist discourse, and came to signify the westernization efforts, to the point of fetishising the mechanisation of agriculture.

Returning to the observations of Morgan Price, interestingly, when he came across these peasants, he 'saw a modern winnowing machine' and when he 'asked why they did not use it, they said they preferred the old way when there was a wind and only used the machine when there was none.' If the peasants had not given a plausible answer, Price would have been in a similar position as the French expert observing olive cultivation in İzmir, since what is at stake is not the productivity or desirability of modern agricultural methods, but whether the Turks are

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<sup>120</sup> Price, M.P. (1947) Morgan Phillips Price Papers, Middle East Centre, St Antony's College, Oxford, GB165-Q232, Phillips Price, Box 1, File 4, p. 3.

<sup>121</sup> Ortaylı, İ. (2001) "Osmanlı'da 18. Yüzyıl Düşünce Dünyasına dair Notlar," *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce: Cilt 1, Cumhuriyet Devreden Düşünce Mirası- Tanzimat ve Meşrutiyet'in Birikimi*, İstanbul: İletişim Yay., p. 37.

capable of acting rationally or not. At another place, Price compares the changes in the agricultural methods from the old Ottoman days to the new Republican Turkey. In the eastern parts of Anatolia, he notes that he 'did not see much change in the methods of farming compared with what I remember when I was in Turkey before the Revolution. Primitive ploughs were used over wide areas and livestock was still half-starved during the winter through insufficient cultivation of fodder crops. On the other hand, I saw progress, especially in Western Turkey, in the use of machinery.'<sup>122</sup>

Regarding the French diplomatic report that I have referred to above on olive cultivation in İzmir and similar diplomatic reports, Mutman refers to a frequently made comparison, identified by the economic historian Charles Issawi, between the Muslim and Christian peasants: 'the former are lazy, undisciplined and primitive, while the latter are hardworking, productive and easily adapted to the modern European agricultural and commercial techniques.'<sup>123</sup>

#### *Poland or Eastern Europe as the Orient?*

At this point, I would like to quote from an article by the eminent historian Norman Davies, whose monumental book *Europe: A History* stands as a majestic attempt to tell a unified history of Europe, including Eastern Europe: 'The Enlightenment of the eighteenth century was deeply imbued with a sense of Western superiority over the East. ... The Enlightenment coincided with a period of history when one of the largest states of Eastern Europe, Poland-Lithuania, was in terminal decline, when the Ottoman Empire still overlay most of the Balkans, and when serfdom was still in place, even in Prussia and Austria. As a result, the stream of travellers' tales retailed in France or Britain contained a mélange of the repulsive and the exotic. ... But much of it was sheer prejudice. ... Edward Gibbon, who never set foot east of Switzerland, love to make play of the 'despicable' peoples of the East. ... [Frederick the Great] once talked of 'that multitude of imbeciles whose names end in -ski.' On the eve of the First Partition of Poland in 1771, he talked of a country 'that has not changed since creation.'<sup>124</sup>

Frederick the Great's depiction of Poland as a country 'that has not changed since creation' resonates well with the western descriptions of the Orient along similar lines. Davies' presentation of the western European attitudes towards Eastern Europe suggests that it too could be considered within the Orientalist framework. One could even include the popular derogatory reference in Britain towards Germans as 'Huns' here. What matters, then, is not

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<sup>122</sup> *Ibid*, p.59.

<sup>123</sup> Mutman, M. (2003) "Şarkiyatçılık / Oryantalizm," p. 195.

<sup>124</sup> Davies, N. (2007) "Fair Comparisons, False Contrasts," in *Europe: East and West*, London: Pimlico, pp. 35-36.

whether such negative views were restricted to the Orient, or to the Turks and Turkey in particular, but the way they were *received* by those against whom they were directed. The Germans, after the end of World War II, could easily shake off the 'Hun' label and get into a union with the rest of Europe. The Poles, likewise, could take their place in the European Union after the fall of the Soviet Union and Warsaw Pact in the early 1990s. However, for the Turks, the Orientalist discourse proved remarkably resilient, thanks to its deep penetration into Kemalism and other modernising discourses in Turkey.

### **'Simple' and Clear Modernity vs Complex and Arcane Ottoman/Turkish Tradition**

When European travellers visited the lands of the Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth century, they were bewildered by the incredible diversity of the empire. There were many different languages spoken, different religions practiced, a wide variety of colourful clothing worn: for the Europeans it was all very complex and very difficult to get a grasp of. The *Times* correspondent in 1877 solemnly reflected that to him, the Turks 'certainly are unknowable. The more one sees in this land the less one understands it.'<sup>125</sup> The standardisation of modernity had not yet reached the Ottoman lands. On the bazaars and markets, many different weight standards were used. The customs changed from locality to locality within short distances and displayed a bewildering array of variation. The situation contrasted sharply with Europe, where modernity reigned.

I would like to illustrate my points with a rather lengthy quotation from a somewhat unconventional source, the travel diary of Thomas Trotter, an American who travelled in the Ottoman Empire in the 1840s.<sup>126</sup> I think his observations beautifully illustrate the transformation from the traditional to the modern. Firstly, I would like to note that even at such an early date, the reforms had managed to affect easily observable changes, as noted by Trotter, though his observations were mainly related to the customs and clothing, that is, the way things 'appeared' to be at first sight. He spoke approvingly of the recent changes due to the reforms in such terms as 'improvement,' 'innovations which cannot fail, in a moderate space of time, to change essentially the character of the population,' or 'increased knowledge, liberality, and refinement among the inhabitants of the Turkish empire.' He gave examples on 'one or two small matters,' one of which was on the changes in the clothing habits of the Turks:

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<sup>125</sup> *The Times* (1877) "The Din of War," 25 June, p. 8.

<sup>126</sup> Thomas Trotter (1846) "Travel and Adventures of Thomas Trotter," *Robert Merry's Museum*, Vol. 11, No. 6, pp. 162-166.

‘During my rambles, I observed more than one-as a ‘sign of the times,’ a regular *shoe-blackening* establishment; such a phenomenon would have astonished a Turk, forty years ago. The sons of the brush now sit ready to give the newest polish to the feet of the faithful; and good black calf-skin shoes are now fast superseding the red and yellow *papooshes* of the old times. Indeed, the whole costume of the Turks is rapidly undergoing a thorough change. Even during the short time I remained in the country, much appeared to be done towards giving a Christian air to the externals of the people. Instead of ... [the costumes] of the former days, ... we now see ... [the Turks] in their demi-European garb. ... The simple red *fez*, or cap, has taken the place of the magnificent turbans, which formerly glittered in the bazaars, and gave them the appearance of a tulip garden in a gale of wind.’

Although Trotter is fascinated with the colourfulness of the traditional Turkish costume, it is clear that he regards the change towards European clothing as a positive step. In various indirect ways, he shows his approval, reflected in his choice of words to describe the new situation. The ‘shoe-blackening establishment’ is ‘regular,’ just like any modern enterprise, based on business plans and expected returns, should be. The European shoes are ‘good calf-skin shoes,’ which is probably as good as one could get in quality shoes. They are ‘black,’ like Henry Ford’s T-Model cars and they get shiny from ‘the newest polish.’

Trotter refers to the new generations of the Turks as ‘the sons of the brush.’ One of the meanings of the word ‘brush’ is given as ‘snub,’ which in turn means ‘act of treating with contempt.’ Trotter tells the story of the transformation from the ‘old Turk,’ who was proud in his culture and treated things European with contempt (‘the brush’), from a ‘new Turk,’ in the sweeps of a shoe-blackening brush through the force of the argument that the European shoe was superior to the Turkish ‘*papoosh*’ shoe in the most vivid imagery. This is hegemony in operation. Finally, the new headgear, the *fez*, although not European in origin and appearance, is modern in essence, because it is ‘simple.’ One cannot help but detect Trotter’s fascination turning into cartoon-like ridicule in his description of the old Turkish headgear.

Morgan Price, whose observations on agricultural methods in Turkey I have referred to above, compares the appearance of people in eastern Anatolia between his first visit there in 1911 and last visit in 1947: ‘I found now that much had changed after thirty-four years since I had been there. The different sects among the Moslems had disappeared. If they still had different beliefs, they did not show it and everyone dressed alike in European clothes. Instead of picturesque head-dresses there was now the cloth cap. The romance of travelling in these parts of the world was gone.’<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Price, M.P. (1947) Morgan Phillips Price Papers, p. 64.



Now, when we compare these observations with Mustafa Kemal's landmark speech in İnebolu in 1925, when he introduced the western hat, the parallels are striking:

'The Turkish people who have established the Turkish Republic are civilised. They have been civilised throughout history, and they are civilised in essence. However, I say, like your own brother, friend, and father, that the Turkish Republic which claims it is civilised should prove and show that it is so with respect to its thinking and mentality. The people of the Turkish Republic who say they are civilised must show that they are so with respect to their family life and life style. ... Please forgive my expression. A clothing that can be described as wildly odd-looking and ridiculous is neither national nor international. ... What is the point of showing a precious stone by covering it with mud and is it appropriate to say 'A precious stone is hiding in this mud, but you cannot comprehend'? In order to show the precious essence, it is necessary and natural to throw away the mud. ... The civilised and international costume is suitable to our nation. We shall wear it. *Scarpini* or *potin* shoes on foot, trouser, vest, shirt, tie, jacket on top and naturally the headgear with sun-protecting visor as the completing feature of the rest. I have to make it clear, the name of this headgear is *chapka*.'<sup>128</sup>

There is a story about a trip Mustafa Kemal undertook in his youth, probably just before or after the 1908 revolution from Istanbul to Central Europe. Reportedly, Mustafa Kemal was dressed in the best fashion of the day in the Ottoman Empire, but he was ridiculed and laughed at once he arrived at Europe. He was deeply embarrassed and ashamed. In a similar story, this time in the 1860s, the pioneering Ottoman journalist Şinasi was embarrassed of his beard while living in Europe and he cut it off. When the news was heard that Şinasi cut his beard, he was subjected to widespread criticism. Şinasi pretended that he had a skin disease and that forced him to cut his beard off. The beard represented masculinity, honour and signified that the person was a Muslim, following the Prophet's custom. When the Ottoman sultans wanted to publicly defame a military commander or vizier, they would have their beards cut off. Hence, Şinasi had definitely travelled a long way from that the traditional Ottoman positive evaluation of the beard to the point of being embarrassed by it.

Returning to Mustafa Kemal's famous 'Hat Revolution Speech,' it is clear that Mustafa Kemal regarded the Ottoman Turkish costume as laughable, but this was a purely subjective evaluation. He saw this costume as uncivilised and unfit for the modern Turkey. He made a distinction between the essence of being civilised, which he said the Turkish nation possessed, and the appearance of being civilised, which was impossible under the traditional costume. In reality, this divide between the essence and the appearance is nothing but the Great East/West Divide that I

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<sup>128</sup> Atatürk, M. K. (2006) "İnebolu'da Bir Konuşma, 28.VII. 1925" *Atatürk'ün Söylev ve Demeçleri*, vol. 2, Ankara: Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi, p. 220-221.

have talked about at length above. When defining what was civilised and modern as opposed to what was uncivilised (or 'barbarous' as the Orientalist discourse did not hesitate to say) and backward, Mustafa Kemal's yardstick firmly pointed to the west. This is 'Orientalism from within' in operation.

Finally, I would like to give another example to the importance of the signifier 'simple' in the Kemalist discourse. One of the chief Kemalist objections towards the use of Arabic alphabet for writing in Turkish was the claim that it looked inelegant on paper. This was in reference to the extremely fast handwriting the Arabic alphabet allowed, but it conveniently forgot the artistic beauty of the Arabic calligraphy, in which the Turks were widely acknowledged to have excelled beyond the Arabs. The interconnecting style of Arabic between the words, the weaving patterns of the written text with interlocking lines, curves, and dots were considered 'ugly' and 'complex,' which was deemed inappropriate for the modern requirement that things should be as 'simple' as possible, with little or no ornamentation. In the Kemalist discourse, the straight lines of printed Latin text, with its sharp turns, well defined edges, and clear outline, many examples of which could be seen in the archaeological finds of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, symbolised the level of civilisation that Turkey needed to march forward.

### **Is Turkey part of Europe?**

The title of this section is the title of an article that appeared in the *Times* in 1964 on the occasion of Turkey's 'association' with the European Economic Community (EEC).<sup>129</sup> I would like to discuss this article at length, because it shows us how the issues I have been discussing until now were still relevant at such a later date. The article discussed the Turkish desire to be considered part of Europe, which manifested itself as Turkey's application for EEC membership, and later, for the European Union membership that the EEC had become. When we consider that this article, published in 1964, specified a waiting period of 'up to 21 years from now the Turks hope and expect to become full members of a united Europe,' and the current status of the accession negotiations with the EU, it seems that 'saga' is the most fitting word to describe this long-running affair Turkey have been going through with Europe.

The article quotes the Turkish foreign ministers declaration that Turkey's association with the EEC would be 'the final consecration of Turkey's European vocation, the aims and ideals constantly pursued and repeatedly proclaimed for centuries.' Another Turkish minister is quoted as pointing

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<sup>129</sup> *The Times* (1964) "Is Turkey Part of Europe?" 12 January, p. 11.

‘the west’ as the ultimate place the Turks had been seeking during their long journey from Central Asia towards the west. Atatürk’s reforms are also noted to have directed Turkey towards the west. At this point, I would like to refer to an interesting hypothetical question: Would Atatürk apply for EU membership if he had been alive today? This is a hotly debated question in Turkey. The Kemalists of the 1960s would probably answer yes. Until the 1990s, the Islamists in Turkey regarded the EU membership process as the natural outcome of 150 years of westernization, which culminated with Kemalism. The article quotes a Turk who said ‘For 100 years we have been trying to become Europeans.’ Remarkably, the Kemalists in Turkey today make up the most vehement opposition to the EU membership, equating it with outright treason and calling it a betrayal to the ‘full independence’ principle of Kemalism.

Returning to the article, it discusses two main (possible) objections or factors of consideration to Turkey’s association with EEC, besides some geographical considerations. The first objection is racial, which is quite surprising, not because the article argues that Turks are racially different than Europeans, but quite the opposite. The article claims that ‘Turks are classified unquestionably by ethnologists as a white race (so for that matter are the Arabs).’ My point is not whether the article’s claim, on the racial status of the Turks, is correct or not. If such an argument was made today (either the Turks belong to white race, or they do not, does not matter), it would be considered racist, but the article was published in 1964. One year before that, Martin Luther King made his famous ‘I have a dream’ speech. The first black football player on the English national team would come some 14 years later. On Christmas Eve 1964, Robert Kennedy predicted that in 40 years’ time the United States may well have a black president (Martin Luther King’s estimate was in ‘less than 25 years.’) I have tried to show in my analysis of the nineteenth century European views on Turkey that in time, as Europe’s self-image changed, the parameters of evaluation it used for Turkey changed, too. Now we see that Turkey provides a useful mirror into the changing European opinions since the 1960s.

The second issue discussed in the article is religion. The article refers to ‘modern educated Turks’ being committed to Atatürk’s principle of secularism, and concludes that it would not create much of a problem. However, before that conclusion, the article solemnly observes ‘Turks are Muslims, and cannot now be converted to Christianity, as were the pagan Finns and Hungarians.’ I cannot keep wondering, if such a conversion was remotely possible, would the author of the article consider placing it as a condition for Turkey’s membership in Europe.

The article makes a clear distinction between the educated Turks and the Turkish peasantry, which corresponds to the distinction I make between the Kemalists and the ‘rest of Turkey’ that Kemalists wanted to transform. The educated Turks are declared to be ‘as familiar with Proust, Kafka, and the rest of it, as we are.’ On the other hand, ‘the mass of the Turkish peasantry, which

still seems to escape into the mosque whenever possible, can hardly be regarded as European.’ Again, this article would be woefully out of place in today’s Europe, where such topics as non-discrimination of ethnic and religious minorities, inclusion, integration, interfaith dialogue, and activism against the possibility of a ‘clash of civilisations’ are being debated.

## Conclusion

My identification of the general European view towards Turkey and the Turks as Orientalism might seem an over-generalization. I am sure one could come up with many exceptions to the general picture I have drawn. The same issue was one of the most powerful criticisms of Edward Said’s *Orientalism*, in relation to his almost complete ignorance of the ‘the attitudes of German, Russian, Italian, Spanish, or Portuguese Orientalists.’<sup>130</sup> However, since my focus is not on Orientalism *per se*, but on its hegemonic influence over Kemalism, what counts most is how the situation was viewed from Turkey and by all accounts, the Turkish perception was that there was a remarkable unity and consistence to the European views regarding Turkey and the Turks.

In similar vein, the list of the elements of the Orientalist discourse that I have presented in Figure 1, and the subsequent discussion of these elements might seem too harsh and judgmental. Actually, the first response of many Turks when they are exposed to the literature, old and new, about their country that has been produced in the west is to immediately stand on the defensive and try to argue against what they perceive as a negative attitude towards the Turks. I have tried to refrain from engaging in a polemic against the examples I have studied throughout the chapter precisely to avoid falling into this trap. There are certainly many elements in the Orientalist discourse that I find objectionable, but then, many issues and problems identified in this discourse are still experienced and unsolved in Turkey today. Besides, many of the discursive elements I have studied were not exclusively used in the Turkish context. The Turks were not the only people called as ‘barbarians’ in the nineteenth century Europe. Apart from the other indisputably Oriental peoples, even the Russians, who shared much more common ground with Western Europe, the most important of which is Christianity, were called so. But, to reiterate my point in the preceding paragraph, I have tried to focus on the effects of this discourse on the Turks throughout the modernisation period, and especially the effects on the Kemalists.

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<sup>130</sup> Windschuttle, K. (1999) “Edward Said’s ‘Orientalism revisited’,” *The New Criterion*, Vol. 17, No.5, January 1999.

Kemalism regarded the previous generations of modernizers in Turkey as having been caught in an impossible job of trying to preserve the Ottoman polity by piecemeal reforms. According to Kemalism, without a complete break with the past, and without getting rid of the old order completely, all such efforts were doomed to fail. For Kemalism, there was no other alternative but the radical one.

While the previous generations of reformers took the people's sensibilities, especially their sense of the 'sacred' into account, and took pains to ensure that their reforms did not cause a 'trauma' in the social, Kemalism behaved in the exact opposite way.<sup>131</sup> Kemalism often purposefully attacked those sensibilities, and did not hesitate to violate the Turkish people's 'sacred' values, because for Kemalism those were the greatest barriers towards enlightenment and progress in Turkey. For Kemalism, the apologetic posture of Ottoman modernizers towards the pressure of the European public and statesmen was evidence that their efforts were not enough. That pressure was humiliating, too, because it gave credence to the claim that the Turks could not progress if left by themselves. Kemalism wanted to change this asymmetrical relationship between Europe and Turkey, so that the Turkish nation could become a proud member of the civilised world.

This chapter has looked at the hegemonic influence of the Orientalist discourse on Turkey, with special emphasis on the Kemalist discourse, but it has not highlighted how Kemalism differed from the previous generations of reformers with respect to the degree of the effectiveness of this hegemonic influence. It did not answer why the previous reformers tried for a conciliatory approach while Kemalism chose a different road and embraced the west fully. This chapter has shown the importance of situating Kemalism within the Turkish modernisation project, while not forgetting to keep track of the dynamics of interaction with Europe. This will be the topic of the next chapter.

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<sup>131</sup> Kahraman, H. B. (2002) "İçselleştirilmiş Oryantalizm, Açık Oryantalizm ve Kemalizm," *Doğu Batı*, Vol. 5, No. 20, pp. 153-180.

## Chapter Two

### Between the Social and the Political: The Double Discourses of Kemalism

The discussion in Chapter One has been concerned with the hegemonic effects of the Orientalist discourse on the succeeding generations of Ottoman Turkish reformers, and it has identified Kemalists as the radical faction for whom salvation could only come by a wholesome adoption of the western civilisation, culture, and values. I concluded that Kemalism accepted both the causes for Turkey's backwardness and the proposals for reform, put forward in the Orientalist discourse, and hence it amounted to an 'Orientalism from within.' This chapter will pick up where the previous chapter has left off, and try to situate Kemalism within the Turkish modernisation project.

In many histories of the 'emergence of modern Turkey,' the emphasis is on the outward face of Atatürk's reforms, which give credence to Kemalism's claim that it constituted a rupture in history. For example, in these histories, the declaration of the republic is taken as the logical culmination of the history of modernisation in Turkey whose roots go back at least to the Tanzimat period. Moreover, the fact that Republicanism was one of the six principles of Kemalism was taken as a sign that Kemalism was committed to the republican ideals. These analyses ignored the circumstances of the proclamation of the republic on 29 October 1923, which was a political move by Mustafa Kemal to appease the opposition towards İsmet Paşa's cabinet. The net effect of the proclamation of the republic was an increase in Mustafa Kemal's powers as the president of the republic, and more limits on the parliament's power in the checks and balances. These analyses did not question the Kemalist discourse's portrayal of opposition against Mustafa Kemal as 'enemies of the nation,' 'supporters of the treacherous Ottoman monarchy, hence, supporters of tyranny and oppression,' and 'opponents of national sovereignty.' In fact, support for the restoration of the Ottoman monarchy has never been strong enough to warrant any worries, but the Kemalist discourse continued to portray those who wanted a multi-party regime with free elections as 'enemies of the republic.' At this point, it is worth remembering that the six principles of Kemalism included republicanism but not a principle being in favour of democracy.

In similar vein, populism was one of those six principles, but as Ernesto Laclau has shown, Kemalism 'was confronted with the paradox of having to construct a 'people' without popular support,' was 'unable to follow a populist route.'<sup>132</sup> When we look at the literature on the

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<sup>132</sup> Laclau, E. (2005) *On Populist Reason*, London: Verso, pp. 208-214.

emergence of modern Turkey and Kemalism, we see that the overwhelming majority treated Kemalist ideology on the basis of Atatürk's speeches and other official sources, which reflected the Kemalist rhetoric. In other words, these works treated ideology as a 'system of ideas,' not as 'a practice producing subjects.'<sup>133</sup> In this chapter, I will look at Kemalism in the light of a number of political concepts, such as liberty, justice, rule of law, and opposition, and I will investigate if Kemalism represented a rupture in the understanding of these concepts in Turkey, from a traditional understanding to a understanding wholly based on the western European model.

Throughout this chapter, I will also try to put Kemalism within the perspective of the Ottoman and Turkish modernisation process, and to situate the Kemalists in the succeeding generations of modernisers and reformers. This will necessarily entail comparing and contrasting the Kemalist period (that is, the 1920s and the 1930s, which could be said to have constituted the heyday of Kemalism in Turkey) with the previous phases of the Turkish modernisation, especially the Young Turk era. Moreover, my analysis will not be limited to an artificial end of the period under focus at either Atatürk's death in 1938, or the end of the one-party rule in 1946-50. If Kemalism had been a totalitarian ideology, similar to Mussolini's Fascism, Hitler's Nazism, or Stalin's version of Marxism-Leninism, imposing such a limit would make sense, however, for a variety of reasons, Kemalism in Turkey was able to continue being relevant after the RPP lost in the 1950 elections.

Kemalism's role in Turkey after 1950 continues to present an unsolved problem from a political theory perspective. In the Kemalist discourse, the problem is avoided by claiming that the untimely death of Atatürk resulted in Kemalism being an 'unfinished revolution,' and the events from 1946-50 were simply a struggle between the progressive revolutionary forces of Kemalism and the forces of counterrevolution, which only desired to take Turkey backwards. In Nur Betül Çelik's analysis, the period after 1950 is presented as a period in which the 'Kemalist hegemony' was slowly dissolving.<sup>134</sup> Yet, these analyses have serious shortcomings, which become ever more apparent if we do not fall into the 'rupture' discourse, and look at the periods before and after the RPP's one-party rule without a fixation on either 1923 or 1950.

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<sup>133</sup> Mouffe, C. (1979) "Hegemony and Ideology in Gramsci," in *Gramsci and Marxist Theory*, C. Mouffe (ed.), London: Routledge, pp. 185-187.

<sup>134</sup> Çelik, N.B. (1996) "Kemalist Hegemony from Its Constitution to Its Dissolution," Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Essex.

## **Kemalism in between Orientalism's 'Insurmountable' East/West Divide**

In Chapter One, I have talked at length about how Europe perceived the Orient as its antithesis and how the East/West Divide was constructed in the Orientalist discourse as an insurmountable barrier. I then stated that the Kemalists' greatest shortcoming had been to accept this Orientalist view in full, as the Kemalists agreed with both the causes of the Ottoman Turkish backwardness and the solutions put forward towards reform, as identified in the Orientalist discourse. This brings us to the question of where to place the Kemalists with respect to the East/West Divide.

The Kemalists saw themselves as having crossed over the East/West Divide, and saw it their duty to help their people make that passage. This seemingly simple observation leads to a number of important insights. Firstly, the Kemalists' effort to modernise Turkey took the barrier for granted. This meant that they still operated within the Orientalist framework but also that they did not question the underlying Orientalist assumptions, hence prone to the same shortcomings. Secondly, the Kemalists' acceptance of the East-West barrier and the fact that they located themselves on the western side and the Turkish people on the eastern side resulted in a scar and trauma in Turkey that still bleeds. Thirdly, while Kemalists viewed themselves as those who fully embraced the Western values and norms, becoming a 'Westerner' was impossible in theory and it proved to be so in practice.<sup>135</sup> Hence, Kemalists became a class with its peculiar value system that was neither fully western nor eastern. But this ambiguous situation was completely rejected, its repercussions being wholly denied by the Kemalists, who came to view their situation as the true embodiment of the West. This complicated the situation even further.

Fourthly, although the Kemalists viewed themselves as 'naturalized' members of the West, this view was not shared by most people in the West. To the western eyes, Kemalists were the ruling elite of Turkey, which had taken drastic steps towards westernization through the Atatürk reforms. Yet, for complex historical, cultural and psychological reasons, they were still regarded as not much different than the Turkish populace at large. The literature in Europe and North America on Turkey throughout the 1920s and the 1930s was full of praise and appreciation for the achievements of the young Turkish Republic, and the contrast between the old, decaying, corrupt Ottoman Empire and the new, progressive, reforming Turkey was made in the sharpest terms. However, from the 1940s onwards, that literature comes to an end, and we see Turkey slowly drift to its age old position, which for Europe variously meant a landscape that was in the Middle East, in the Levant, beyond the Balkans, beyond the Iron Curtain throughout Europe, bordering the Soviet Union, or simply put, in the Orient, which embodied all the ambiguities related to Turkey.

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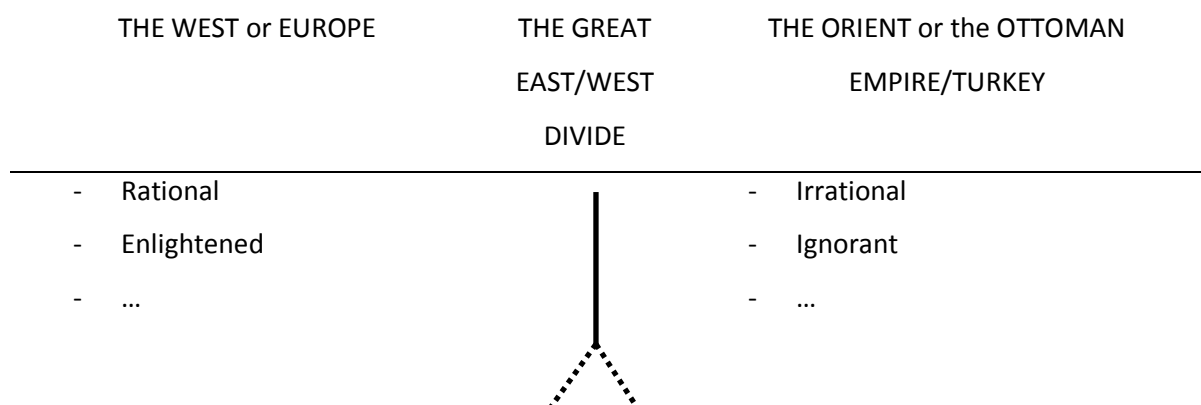
<sup>135</sup> This is also related to the discussion below on 'catching up with the level of modern civilization,' which would be known as the ultimate aim of Kemalism.



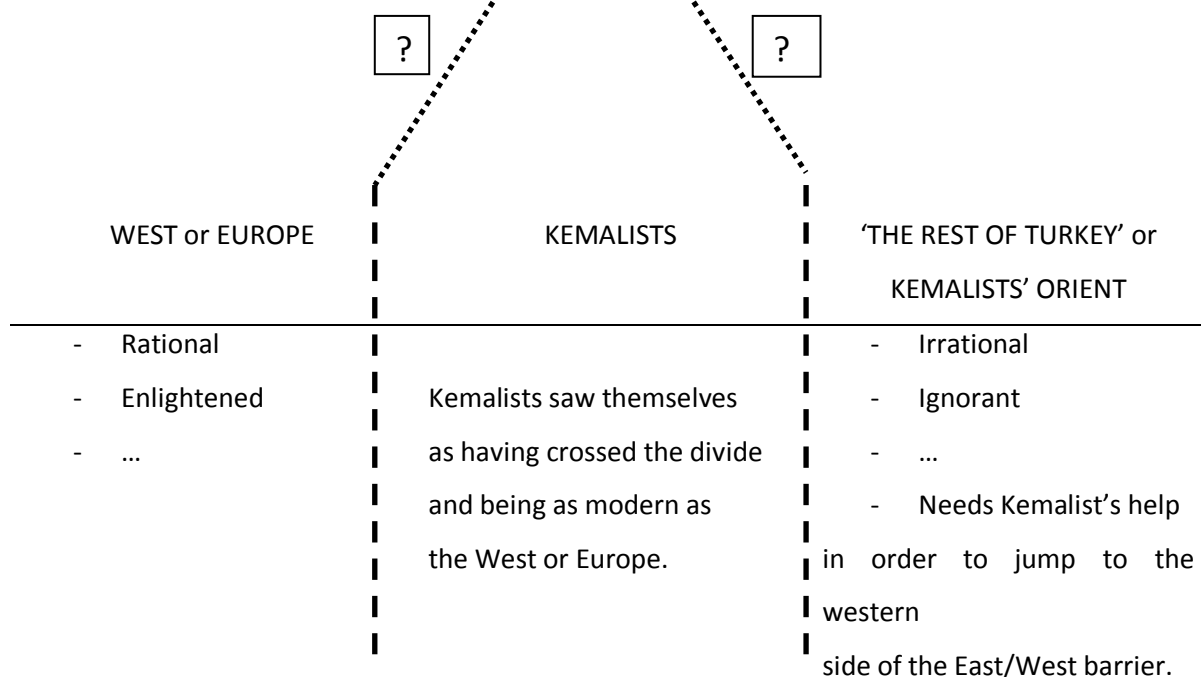
In any case, all these meant that from a European perspective, the Kemalists were to be located on the eastern side of the barrier, and it was a huge disappointment for the Kemalists and to a certain extent for Turkey in general, to be judged by the Europeans as being not modern enough, or not having reformed enough. We can see the seeds of anti-Europeanism in the emergent Kemalism of the post-Cold War period in this disappointment. The widespread accusations against Europe about the existence of 'double standards' with respect to Turkey must be read in this light. At the most basic level, within the context of Turkey's accession negotiations with the EU, the 'double standards' referred to the Europeans' demands from Turkey to attain much higher and stricter standards, compared to the other applicant countries from eastern Europe and the Balkans. However, deep inside, the 'double standards' refer to a perceived refusal on the European side to acknowledge that Turkey has become a modern, developed, democratic country, on par with Europe. The repercussions of this disappointment with Europe have not fully developed yet, but they may prove to be catastrophic for the future of Kemalism, which had deviated from previous generations of modernisers in its conviction that modernisation could only happen by wholesale adoption of Europe.

Finally, just as the Kemalists saw themselves as the part of the Turkish society that had made the leap, passed the barrier, embraced the western, rational model, and risen to a higher moral ground (with respect to the rest of the Turkish society that was backwards etc), they also saw themselves as being superior compared to the previous generations of Ottoman modernisers, because their embrace was full and not conditional or half-hearted as was the case for the Ottoman modernisers.

In Chapter One, I showed the European view of the Orient, the European self-image, and the East/West Divide schematically in a figure. I would like now to present the above discussion in similar fashion, in Figures 1 and 2, as shown in the next page. The question related to the second drawing is this: Which of the lines represent the East-West barrier?



**Figure 1:** The Orientalist View of the West/Europe and the Orient/Ottoman Empire or Turkey



**Figure 2:** The Kemalists' viewpoint visavis the West and the Orient.

### Mimicry, Mockery and Identity: Kemalism and Post-Colonial Theory

The remarkable transformation of the West from the Renaissance era onwards through its unique history of modernisation enabled European states to expand their powers to all corners of world. The age of exploration in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries gave way to the age of colonisation that culminated in the establishment of colonial empires in the nineteenth century. From the Americas to Africa, from the Far East to Australia, indigenous populations and countries, which had hitherto been sealed off from the rest of the world, and especially inaccessible to the West, were suddenly faced with the advent of the West in all its might, from its superior military power to its enormous wealth, from its scientific and technological advancement to the virally

influential political and social ideals. The colonial rule of the West over non-western peoples, however, ran counter to the universalist pretensions of the West itself. When the people of the British colonies in America declared that 'We hold these truths self-evident that all men are created equal' it was not a far stretch for the black slaves in the United States of America to take inspiration from these words, and boldly claim that they too were created equal, that is, equal to the whites.

In order to illustrate the enormity of the scope of colonialism and imperialism over the world, it is frequently pointed out that in 1914, on the eve of World War I, 'almost 85% of the world's land surface was under the control of a small group of mainly European colonial powers.'<sup>136</sup> Although many independent states were established in the former European colonies, especially after World War II, the colonial forms of dominance and hegemony still persist under various guises. The postcolonial theory, also known as subaltern studies, has developed especially to understand how that was possible.

In this section, I shall look at the works of three authors which are often cited in the postcolonial literature. I shall first evaluate Bhabha's concepts of 'mimicry' and 'mockery' as he elaborated in an article titled 'Of Mimicry and Man: The ambivalence of colonial discourse.'<sup>137</sup> I will then look at Partha Chatterjee's study on the emergence of Indian nationalism as an anti-colonialist movement in *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*.<sup>138</sup> Finally I will consider the identity question in the light of Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*.<sup>139</sup>

My primary aim will be to see if the main concepts and problematics of the Post-Colonial Studies could be used to analyse Kemalism's complex relationship with the West through Orientalism, and that with Islam through secularism. The chief colonial setting will be India under British rule while looking at Bhabha and Chatterjee's work, whereas for Fanon, it will be French colonies from North Africa to the Antilles. I will argue that while the works of these authors offer valuable insights in understanding the Turkish case and position Kemalism into a proper context, a comparison between the development of the colonial discourse and the Kemalist discourse reveal significant differences.

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<sup>136</sup> Huddart, D. (2006) *Homi K. Bhabha*, Routledge Critical Thinkers, London and New York: Routledge, p. 1.

<sup>137</sup> Bhabha, H. K. (1994) "Of Mimicry and Man: The ambivalence of colonial discourse," in *The Location of Culture*, London and New York: Routledge, pp. 85-92.

<sup>138</sup> Chatterjee, P. (1993) *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

<sup>139</sup> Fanon, F. (2008) *Black Skin, White Masks*, C. L. Markmann (tr.), London: Pluto Press.

It might appear that the history of anti-colonialist struggle in India and that of the Ottoman Turkish modernisation are not related at all, but that was far from truth. To begin with, millions of Muslims lived under British colonial rule in India. Muslims could be a minority, but they were a significant minority. Moreover, much of India had been ruled by Muslim rulers for centuries before the British. Furthermore, since the sultanate of Delhi in the thirteenth century, many dynasties ruling over India had originally been Turkic or Turkish. The empire Babur established in the sixteenth century was called 'Mughal,' derived from Mongol in deference to the fact that Babur could claim descent from Genghis Khan through Timur, known to Europeans as Tamerlane. Yet, Babur was more Turkish than Mongol, having composed his famous memoirs *Babürname* in the eastern Turkish dialect Çagatay. In the Ottoman Turkish imaginary, India was a distant land but still part of the Abode of Islam (*Darü'l-İslam*).

The cultural ties between India and the Ottoman lands were strengthened thanks to the wide-ranging activities of the Sufi order. İmam Rabbani, a Sufi sheikh of the Nakşibendi order who lived in sixteenth century Mughal India, is revered in the Turkish Islamic culture as the 'one who reinvigorated Islam in the second hijri millenia' (*müceddid-i elf-i sani*) and the Turkish translation of his book *Mektubat-ı Rabbani* is still read. Around the same time as İmam Rabbani, a group of Islamic scholars in India edited a monumental compilation of legal opinions in the Hanafi school of Sunni Islam, known as *Fetava-yı Hindiyye* ('The Indian Responsa'). The work was held in such high esteem that numerous manuscript copies of this work survive in libraries throughout Turkey and even a modern Turkish translation spanning 16 volumes has been printed.<sup>140</sup>

#### *Ottoman Turkey and Indian Muslims in the Age of Pan-Islamism*

The Pan-Islamist policies of Abdülhamid II only strengthened the ties between Ottoman Turkey and the Muslims of India. In late nineteenth and early twentieth century, one of the great fears of the British imperial policy was a Muslim awakening and rebellion instigated by the agents of the caliph at Istanbul, from Cairo to Calcutta throughout the British domains. As Azmi Özcan notes, 'the attitudes of the Indian Muslims towards the Turks were somewhat different [than their attitudes towards their other Muslim brethren]; the Turks were dearest to them. They felt sorrow at the Turks' woes and found happiness at their joy and successes, which demonstrably manifested itself on every occasion, especially from the second half of the nineteenth century onwards. ... [E]specially after the disappearance of the last vestiges of Muslim rule in India,

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<sup>140</sup> *Fetava-yı Hindiyye* (1983) M. Efe (tr.), 16 vols., Ankara: Akçağ Yayınları.

Muslims developed a sentimental attachment to the Turks, who were not only the last stronghold of Islam, the Ottoman Empire, but also their sultan was viewed as the Caliph of all Muslims.<sup>141</sup>

In 1914, when the Ottoman Empire entered war on the side of the Germans, the Ottoman sultan declared the war as a jihad and called all Muslims throughout the world to unite under his banner. The Ottoman sultan's declaration of jihad, supported by the *fatwa* of the chief Ottoman Islamic scholar, the şeyhülislam, was printed in 6 major Muslim languages and distributed throughout the Islamic world. One of these 6 languages was Urdu, the literary and administrative language of the Muslims in India. Although the Muslims of India did not take up arms against the British on the side of Turkey, they nevertheless organised relief campaigns for refugees. Hence we find Morgan Price, the *Manchester Guardian* reporter distributing charity funds in eastern Anatolia to help Muslim refugees from the Caucasus in 1916.<sup>142</sup> When Istanbul the seat of the Ottoman sultan and the Muslim caliph was occupied at the end of the war and when the independence of Turkey was in danger, the solidarity campaigns among Indian Muslims intensified. Large sums of money were collected to support the Turkish national resistance in 1919-1920. Those funds were eventually used as the first capital of the bank, Türkiye İş Bankası, founded by the orders of Mustafa Kemal. Today, it is the largest private bank in Turkey.

Interestingly, the plight of the colonised people has a special place in the Kemalist discourse, which regards the liberation of Turkey as the first successful anti-colonialist and anti-imperialist resistance in the world. It is also a common theme among the Kemalist writers that the Kemalist success was a source of inspiration to all colonised people throughout the world.

#### *From Mimicry as an Overt Colonial Strategy to Mimicry as a Potential Form of anti-Colonial Resistance*

Mimicry is one of the many terms introduced by Homi Bhabha, besides such others as 'liminality,' 'hybridity,' 'ambivalence,' and 'stereotype,' terms which have now become part of the essential vocabulary of post-colonialist studies.<sup>143</sup> Yet, the power of Bhabha's analysis lies in the complex way he weaves these terms into his careful analysis of colonial texts, drawing up from a variety of disciplines, from the psychoanalytic work of Lacan to the deconstruction of Derrida. Bhabha's article 'Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse' is among of the most

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<sup>141</sup> Özcan, A. (1997) *Pan-Islamism: Indian Muslims, the Ottomans and Britain, 1877-1924*, Leiden: Brill, p. 205.

<sup>142</sup> Price, M.P. (1947) Morgan Phillips Price Papers, Middle East Centre, St Antony's College, Oxford, GB165-O232, Phillips Price, Box 1, File 4, p. 7.

<sup>143</sup> Ashcroft, B. et al. (2000) *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*, London and New York: Routledge.

frequently cited texts of post-colonial theory. From '*almost the same, but not quite*' to '*blurred copy*', Bhabha manages to cram many fertile concepts into a text that is only 8 pages long.

Bhabha's 'mimicry' is firstly a strategy of the colonisers regarding the colonised people they are ruling over. It is born out of a need to reconcile the universalist aspirations of the discourse of the West with the needs of the day-to-day running of colonial affairs. The language, customs, culture and learning of the colonised people, that is, the Orientals, are deemed backward, ignorant, and in general not suitable for 'this modern day and age,' as I have studied with respect to specific elements of the Orientalist discourse in Chapter One. Furthermore, the achievements of the West, starting with its science and technology but also including its social and political system point to a universal standard that transcends the cultural and civilisational boundaries, as evidenced from the French 'Universal Declaration of Human Rights' to the American declaration 'all men are created equal.' In 1919, after the Great War, when the British contemplated delegating some power to the natives in India in what is known as Montagu-Chelmsford constitutional proposals, these proposals were based on the universalist aspirations of the western political discourse. Vincent Smith, who was 'the most distinguished imperial historian of India' at the time according to Chatterjee, summed up this position succinctly: '(1) that a policy, assumed to have been successful in Western communities, *can* be applied to India; and (2) that such a policy *ought* to be applied to India, even at the request of an admittedly small body of Indians, because Englishmen believe it to be intrinsically the best.'<sup>144</sup> Smith would argue that both of these arguments were false.

Yet, it is also evidently clear to the colonisers that there is somehow a difference between the Westerners ('the white man') and the Orientals. Whether due to an innate deficiency lending credence to racial theories, or due to the effects of centuries-long ignorance, the Orientals are not capable of self-rule. Vincent Smith's argument on this issue boiled down to the institutionalised character of democratic regimes as opposed to the personal and arbitrary nature of Oriental rule.<sup>145</sup> He explained that a democratic government held accountable to the rule of law, which is 'supposed to be of universal application,' could not be established in India by the Indians because it was against "a deep stream of Indian tradition which has been flowing for thousands of years .... The ordinary men and women of India do not understand impersonal government .... They crave for government by a person to whom they can render loyal homage.'<sup>146</sup> Therefore, it becomes a paternalistic duty for the coloniser to rule, while encouraging the colonised people to adopt the western culture, lifestyle, values, institutions etc.

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<sup>144</sup> Chatterjee, P. (1993) *The Nation and Its Fragments*, p. 16.

<sup>145</sup> This discussion is also related to the 'Oriental Despot' section in Chapter One.

<sup>146</sup> Chatterjee, P. (1993) *The Nation and Its Fragments*, p. 16.

While 'adoption' is a more neutral and judgment-free word to describe this process, Bhabha refers to as 'mimicry,' a form of imitation where appearance is more important than the substance. So far, mimicry as a colonialist policy is intentional and overt. In India, for example, Lord Macaulay's *Minute to the Parliament* in 1835 called for the establishment of schools for Indians where they would be taught not only the English language but English literature, arts and learning, too. Yet, would an Indian graduate of this school, who was exceedingly successful and learnt everything that could possibly be learnt, be considered to have reached the same level as his British counterpart? That was the heart of the issue, and the answer was negative. Lord Macaulay could only see a minimal, passive role for those Indians enlightened by English education, 'a class of interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern – a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, opinions, in morals, and in intellect.'<sup>147</sup>

This difference between the colonisers and the people mimicking them is one between the original and its imitation – a 'blurred copy' in Bhabha's terminology. Bhabha states that 'colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, *as a subject of a difference that is almost the same but not quite.*'

The second aspect of Bhabha's analysis is his crucial insight. Although Bhabha regards mimicry as an intentional and overt strategy of the coloniser, it can also become a potent form of resistance against colonialism, since 'mimicry is also potentially mockery.' 'The mimicry of the post-colonial subject is therefore always potentially destabilizing to colonial discourse, and locates an area of considerable political and cultural uncertainty in the structure of imperial dominance.'<sup>148</sup> 'The *menace* of mimicry is its *double* vision which in disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts its authority.'<sup>149</sup>

### *Mimicry and the Ottoman Turkish/Kemalist Case*

If we try to make a comparative analysis between Bhabha's 'mimicry' in the colonial setting and the Ottoman Turkish modernisation from the Tanzimat period onwards into Kemalism, some parallels are obvious. The pro-westernising currents in Turkey that called for imitation of the West and the Kemalist desire to completely adopt western culture and civilisation could well be labelled as mimicry. The limitations placed upon western-style education in uplifting Indians to

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<sup>147</sup> Macaulay, T. B. (1958) "Minute on education," in W. Theodore de Bary (ed.) *Sources of Indian Tradition*, vol. II, New York: Columbia University Press, p. 49 Quoted in Bhabha, H. K. (1994) "Of Mimicry and Man," p. 87.

<sup>148</sup> Ashcroft, B. et al. (2000) *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*, p. 127.

<sup>149</sup> Bhabha, H. K. (1994) "Of Mimicry and Man," p. 88.

the same level as their English teachers are eerily reminiscent of the 'Bon pour Orient' diplomas issued by Sorbonne and other French universities as I discussed in Chapter One.

Furthermore, setting the ultimate target for Turkey to 'catch up with the level of modern civilisation' but in a way that will never be accomplished can be regarded as corresponding to the 'rule of colonial difference,' as defined by Chatterjee in his analysis of colonial India as the essential difference between the coloniser and the colonised, in the Turkish case.<sup>150</sup> The level of modern civilisation is an ambivalent target that keeps moving away and away, never to be caught up. Just as the 'rule of colonial difference' in India is an essential difference between the colonised and the coloniser that will always be present, the continued existence of the need to 'catch up with modern civilisation' guarantees the guardianship of Kemalism over the country to continue.

Parallels can even be drawn with respect to the 'mockery' aspect of Kemalist mimicry. In 1925, when wearing western-style hats was made compulsory in Turkey through the Hat Law, a British diplomatic report made fun of the fact that peasants in Ankara was wearing Panama hats that were entirely unsuitable to the cold weather of the Central Anatolian plains. From the western perspective, wearing a certain type of hat might denote class, social stature, wealth, even political affiliation, in ways that I have described above as forming 'the social'. Yet, all those elements could not be reproduced by the Kemalists by simply passing a law that forbade all the existing, traditional headgear for being 'uncivilised' or 'laughable' and replaced it by western style headgear. Moreover, hat was a practical item, protecting the wearer from the elements. Hence, when a hat suitable for the hot and humid weather of the tropics was worn in an entirely inappropriate climate, it was rightly ridiculed.

The westerners have not been the only ones to subject the Kemalist reforms, especially those that had to do with the cultural elements, to mockery. There has been an ongoing criticism of Kemalism in Turkey, too. The Kemalist reforms were criticised as 'wardrobe reforms.' There were many complaints that the western tie was too constraining to the neck and too uncomfortable. It was dubbed 'the bridle of civilisation' making a mockery of the tie-wearer as looking like a horse. But since wearing the tie made one 'civilised' it was a necessary burden. The Islamist poet Necip Fazıl ridiculed Kemalism in a poem he wrote as 'a hat, a pair of gloves, a monkey, and there it is, the revolution!' Obviously, Necip Fazıl's monkey was a Kemalist (or Mustafa Kemal himself) in full ceremonial dress in the most formal western style with a top hat, tail-coat, and a pair of white gloves, mimicking the West like 'a monkey' and for Necip Fazıl that was the essence of the Kemalist reforms.

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<sup>150</sup> Chatterjee, P. (1993) *The Nation and Its Fragments*, pp. 16-27.



When Morgan Price, the British journalist working for Manchester Guardian, visited eastern Anatolia in 1947, he was invited to a ball at Erzurum, where men and women were expected to 'mingle like Europeans' and perhaps dance to the music, but they were seated on opposite sides of the ballroom, sitting anxiously. For Price, it was as if these Turkish men and women were attending a religious ceremony at a mosque. That too could be viewed as a mockery, not of the people but of Kemalist reforms that enforced a foreign lifestyle on people in the name of modernisation and secularisation.

Even the staunchly Kemalist authors of the early Republican era admitted the artificiality of the balls organised in Ankara in the 1920s and the 1930s. The greatest difficulty was that the socialisation of women, especially married women, in balls where they could freely fraternise with men other than their husbands or family acquaintances were deeply resented, even by those most loyal to Mustafa Kemal. According to Şevket Süreyya Aydemir, the very first ball was a total flop, where 'everyone simply sat down on their chairs and talked in hushed voices, looking more like a men-only religious *mevlid* gathering.'<sup>151</sup> After this failure, the second ball was organised by Mustafa Kemal himself, yet only three women, the wives of Yakup Kadri, Falih Rıfkı and Ruşen Eşref, attended the ball. They would then complain to him: 'O our pasha, are we the only *victims* of this revolution? Where are the wives of your aides, the members of the parliament, the ministers?' (Emphasis mine). These women's self-description as 'victims' is noteworthy. No matter what measures were taken, those invited to such balls in Ankara always sought ways to avoid bringing their women.<sup>152</sup>

### *Differences between Colonial and Kemalist Mimicry*

Despite all these apparent parallels between the colonial situation and the one that prevailed in the Ottoman Turkey and Kemalism, there are significant differences, too. Firstly, mimicry was not the first strategy of the European powers towards the Ottoman Empire. As I have discussed in Chapter One, the Europeans wanted to 'drive the Turks out of Europe.' While the main goal of the colonialist policy was to ensure the continuity of the colonial rule and to suppress any anti-colonialist movement, the colonisers could always choose to leave and return to the mother country if their interests dictated so. In 1878, George Couper, a British colonial administrator in India, wrote 'That there should be one law alike for the European and Native is an excellent thing in theory, but if it could really be introduced in practice we should have no business in the

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<sup>151</sup> Aydemir, Ş. S. (1999) *Tek Adam*, vol. 3, İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, p. 55.

<sup>152</sup> Atay, F. (1953) *Çankaya*, İstanbul: Dünya Yay., pp. 411-412; Karaosmanoğlu, Y. K. (1999) *Ankara*, İstanbul: İletişim, p. 105.

country.’<sup>153</sup> In contrast, the long and complex history of rivalry between Europe and the Ottoman Empire meant that the European powers wanted to end the centuries-old Ottoman rule in Europe,<sup>154</sup> especially since it entailed ruling over Christian (and Jewish) subjects, who were deemed the be European.

Secondly, in the westerners’ mind, the Ottoman Turkish identity as the anti-thesis of European or Christian identity was strongly fixed, while there was no such history and no ill-feeling towards the identities of colonised people, whether they were Indians or the native Caribbeans. If an Indian named Sanjay mimicked the English, it could pass as mimicry, whereas if an Ottoman Turk named Mehmed mimicked the West, it could never be successful because an Ottoman ruler named Mehmed had conquered Constantinople in 1453 and made it Istanbul. The difference between the coloniser and the colonised was that of race, which made mimicry possible, because no matter how perfect the mimicry was enacted, race always made it possible to distinguish the original from the ‘blurred copy.’ On the other hand, the difference between the westerner and the Ottoman Turk was that of religion and identity. This difference could mean nothing, since it was possible for someone to convert to another religion and renounce his nationality or identity. This implied that mimicry could be perfect, which would then instantly destroy it being mimicry. But this difference could mean everything if the person in question clung to his identity. Then, the mimicry would not be mimicry at all. The identity difference would spoil any pretension towards that effect.

The conversion of Haluk Fikret to Christianity, the son of the famous poet Tevfik Fikret, and his alienation from Turkey illustrates the centrality of Islam in Turkish identity. In late nineteenth century, Tevfik Fikret was one of the greatest poets and a leading voice of westernism. Haluk was born in 1895, and he was the only son of Tevfik Fikret. In fact, Haluk was more than that, for Tevfik Fikret, the baby represented ‘his only flower in life, his hopes for the future, an ideal youth to be a role model for the nation, his only solace, in summary much more than a son.’<sup>155</sup> He mentioned Haluk in many poems, where Haluk represented not only his son but the whole Turkish youth. Tevfik Fikret sent Haluk to Britain for education but in 1909 he converted to Christianity, which created a huge controversy in Turkey.

When Tevfik Fikret heard the news of Haluk’s conversion to Christianity, he wrote a poem titled ‘Haluk’s catechism’ in which he set out a vision of humanistic worldview he thought his son still subscribed to, regardless of his professed religion. However, Tevfik Fikret was deeply

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<sup>153</sup> Couper, G. (1878) *Parliamentary Proceedings*, LVII, p. 498; Quoted in Chatterjee, P. (1993) *The Nation and Its Fragments*, p. 21.

<sup>154</sup> Although the Ottomans ruled over the Balkans, the Balkans were nevertheless considered part of Europe. I discuss how Bosphorus came to represent the eastern limit of Europe in Chapter One.

<sup>155</sup> Andı, F. *et al* (1999) *Kartpostallarla Tevfik Fikret ve Çevresi*, İstanbul: İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi Kültür İşleri Daire Başkanlığı, p. 1.

disappointed too, and he died in 1915. In the meantime, Haluk moved to America and graduated as mechanical engineer from Michigan University. He married with an American woman and took American citizenship. In 1943, he decided to dedicate his life to Christianity and eventually became an ordained Presbyterian priest. In 1963, a Turkish journalist contacted Haluk in America and asked him about his conversion and his relationship with his father. According to Haluk, his father's disappointment was mainly due to the fact that he was not talented in literature or arts. He also said he had never had the literary capacity to appreciate his father's famous poems about him and at the time he even had difficulty with normal Turkish. In Turkey, so much has been written and said on his conversion to Christianity, which has been regarded as a loss of Turkish identity.

The third point I would like to make concerns the observation that Kemalism was only a step in the long process of Turkish modernisation. If we are going to talk about Turkish mimicry of the West, it would be more appropriate to look at the Tanzimat period in the nineteenth century. A favourite subject of severe criticism in the literature and the press of the period is a stereotype of Ottoman bureaucrat or intellectual, who greatly admires the West and mimics the Western culture in a superfluous way. Ahmet Midhat Efendi's novel *Felatun Bey ve Rakım Efendi* from this period parodies Felatun Bey, who made a mockery of himself through his mimicry of the western lifestyle and learning which was clearly superfluous and baseless. The eminent Turkish historian İlber Ortaylı notes that a lively illustration to this stereotype was Kamil Bey, a bureaucrat at the ministry of foreign affairs, the ludicrousness of whose French was legendary.<sup>156</sup> He was known as 'French imitator' in his time, always trying to pepper his talk with French idioms though his French was very poor. 'In order to say "things have become complicated" he would say "les affaires sont devenue fourchette" or instead of the Ottoman Turkish formula "The order belongs to my lord regarding this issue" he would say "a cette porte l'irade est a monseigneur".' Kamil Bey thought proper French custom necessitated ending a meal with Roquefort cheese and tried to have some when he was at the table of Reshid Pasha, the Ottoman grand vizier at the time. Since Reshid Pasha did not like cheese at all, he strongly chided Kamil Bey for his behaviour.

The argument I am trying to construct here is that the mimicry of this Tanzimat stereotype and the strong criticism it garnered was well known to all, including the Kemalists. In fact, criticism against the mimicry of the West continued unabated in the 1920s and 1930s, during the heyday of Kemalist reforms. For example, an article that appeared in the *Milliyet* daily in 1933 criticised those 'considered as the *chic* and high class, who appear alien to the life around them.'<sup>157</sup> These people took pride in following the news in Turkey through French newspapers, speaking to their maids in French, hiring a foreign governess for their children, and decorating a Christmas tree

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<sup>156</sup> Ortaylı, İ. (1999) *İmparatorluğun En Uzun Yüzyılı*, İstanbul: İletişim, p. 244.

<sup>157</sup> B.C. (1933) "Onlara Dair," *Milliyet*, 10 April, p. 3.

during Christmas. The author gave these examples in a contemptuous manner, because to him they were mimicry of the West. He also accused them of being insensitive towards the Kemalist reforms. For him, the only acceptable perspective was the national perspective. In a satirical piece that appeared in the *Akşam* daily in 1936, a journalist made fun of the fad for learning foreign languages through an imaginary dialogue between two friends.<sup>158</sup> They were at a theatre to watch a play in French, and one of them was trying to learn French entirely by himself, reading books and newspapers with the help of dictionaries. The journalist makes a mockery of his efforts by his laughable attempts to decipher the play's language. Finally, he picks up a conversation from the row behind them, and jumps on his dictionary at once to understand what is being said. His friend steps in and stops him, because the conversation they overheard was not French, but Greek! The friend then chides him, 'if you try to understand everything you hear with the help of a dictionary, I am afraid you will forget Turkish soon...'

Fourthly, as Bhabha notes, mimicry as a colonial strategy is overt and serious, while mimicry as a potential form of resistance for the colonised people is subtle, performed unconsciously, and ironic. The Kemalist decision for westernising reforms, however, was the result of a long-running debate in Turkey. The question was whether it was enough to embrace the western science and technology and preserve the Turkish culture, tradition and social life, or to accept the western culture and habits as well. The Kemalists made a deliberate and serious choice and went for a wholesale westernisation program, accepting the discomfort such a choice would bring to their own lives. For example, Mustafa Kemal himself was fond of the *Rumelian* folk music, that is, the traditional music of Turkish people in the Balkans, but since he believed that western classical music was superior to Turkish music, he refrained from listening to the *Rumelian* folk tunes as much as he could. During the long dinners he loved to hold, he would ask for those tunes only when he was inebriated and could not care about embracing the western culture. In similar fashion, many Kemalists found it difficult to take notes in the newly adopted Latin script, since they had been accustomed to Arabic script since their childhood. Yet, they would never express any discomfort publicly, because it would harm the Kemalist reforms. For the Kemalist generation who was born in 1890s and 1900s and who enthusiastically embraced Kemalist reforms, mimicry did not come naturally –it was something they forced on themselves as a form of sacrifice for the good of the nation.

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<sup>158</sup> C.R. (1936) "Bir işe yaramıyor!," *Akşam*, 2 November, p. 3.

We now come to a critical junction that will clarify my main argument in this section. In Bhabha's analysis, two primary agents emerge, the coloniser and the colonised. Mimicry is then either an overt strategy of the coloniser over the colonised, or a subtle form of resistance of the colonised over the coloniser. We will see below that these two categories hold true in Chatterjee and Fanon, too. These two categorisations are crafted in such binary opposition to each other that there is no room left for any splits within either camp. Hence, any differentiation one might observe in the anti-colonial movement will be dwarfed by the stark contrast provided by the colonialist policies.

In the Turkish case, however, in no way does Kemalism dominate the political discourse. Although they are not discussed in detail, there are many other competing discourses, starting with the well-known 'three courses of political action' as discussed by Yusuf Akçura in 1911, namely, Ottomanism, Islamism, and Turkism.<sup>159</sup> One might then add westernism to this trio and these would then form the main currents of the political debate in the second constitutional period in Turkey. I need to emphasise that all of these discourses were in favour of modernisation, but they differed widely with respect to the best strategy towards that goal, and in the final instance, they were all united in their determination to find an answer to the same question: 'How can this state be saved?'<sup>160</sup>

Kemalism emerged in this milieu, appropriated many elements from these modernising discourses, and even eclipsed them altogether. It then tried to suppress them and act as if modernisation in Turkey started proper with Kemalism. Still, Kemalism had a long way to go before it could represent the totality of the Turkish political discourse, but the great Ottoman Turkish tradition, customs, and habits, which I call in this thesis under the general signifier of Islam stood directly in the way. Islam represented the Oriental identity, and the Kemalist discourse had to devote more energy against it than it would ever expend against the West.

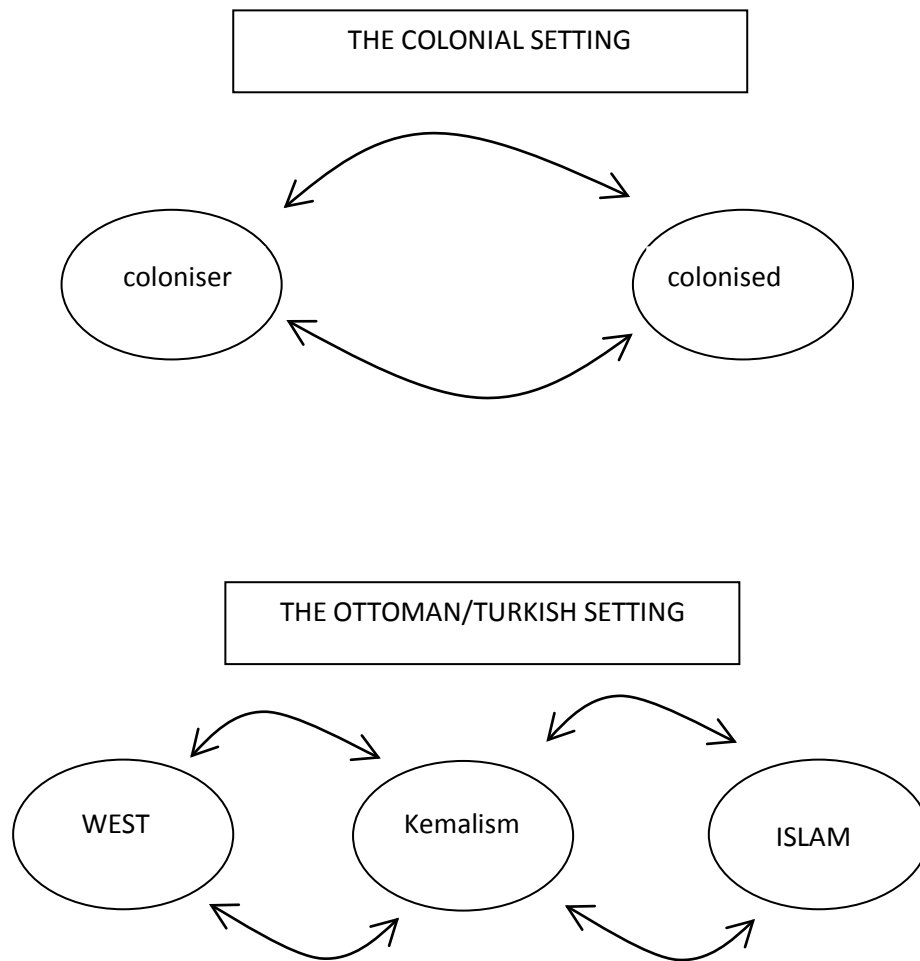
We are now ready to bring together various threads that have been gathering so far and state the crucial difference between the colonial case and the Turkish case. As reflected in a somewhat cryptic manner in the title of this sub-section '*Who is Mimicking and Mocking Whom and to What End?*' the difference will be revealed if we consider mimicry and mockery as acts involving two

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<sup>159</sup> Akçura, Y. (1911) *Üç Tarz-ı Siyaset*, İstanbul: Matbaa-i Kader.

<sup>160</sup> As the pre-eminent Turkish historian of the Young Turk movement, Şükrü Hanioglu notes, in late nineteenth century, intellectuals and revolutionaries from all corners of the world frequented the cafes and salons of European cities, from Paris to Zurich, from London to Genève. While most of them dreamt of toppling the regimes and building political utopias, the Young Turks were unique among them in their quest to save the state. The Young Turks hated Abdülhamid II and made plans to end his rule, but they sought to reinstitute the Ottoman constitution and save the state. One may argue that even the ultimate aim of Kemalism's relentless secularism served the same end.

parties, one being the subject or initiator of the act and the other being the object of it or the one at the receiving end.



**Figure 3: The main elements in the colonial and Ottoman/Turkish settings.**

While the colonial setting involved the interplay between the two antagonistic elements of the coloniser and the colonised, the Ottoman/Turkish setting involved three elements: the West, Kemalism, and Islam, or the Orient.

In the colonial case, mimicry emerges as a strategy for both the colonisers and the colonised. The colonisers would like the colonised to mimic them, and then, mimicry could become a potential form of resistance for the colonised *against* the coloniser. In the Turkish/Kemalist case, however, one can talk about two different types of mimicry. The first mimicry is that of Kemalists mimicking the West. Nevertheless, from the Kemalist perspective, there can be no such mimicry, as they consider themselves to have crossed the West/East barrier and have reached an equal footing with the West. The Kemalists would never accept that they are a 'blurred copy' of the West.

Anyhow, this mimicry is valid only from the viewpoint of the West and 'the rest of the Orient.' The second type of mimicry is that of the Orient mimicking the West, or, since in the Kemalist discourse there is no difference between the two, the Kemalists. Identifying a difference between these two types of mimicries necessitates recognising Kemalists as a distinct group, situated between the West and the Orient, or to be more precise, 'the Rest of the Orient,' as described in Figure 2 above.

When the westerners are making a mockery of Kemalist mimicry, they do not necessarily grant agency to the Kemalists; in their eyes the Kemalists might not be much different than other Turks who might or might not have embraced westernisation so eagerly. But when there is a domestic criticism of the mimicry of the Kemalists, there is definitely a distinction being made between the Kemalists and the westerners; this mockery is squarely aimed at the Kemalists. Identifying a difference between the western and the domestic mockery of Kemalist mimicry forces us to reach the same conclusion as in the previous paragraph, namely that it is necessary to recognise Kemalists as a distinct group, situated between the West and the Orient.

#### *Chatterjee and Constructing Nationalism as the Driving Force of the Anti-Colonialist Movement*

While Bhabha's analysis derives its power from literary criticism and post-structural theories, Chatterjee's work is solidly based on the historiography of Indian nationalism. Although the title of Chatterjee's book *The Nation and Its Fragments* is quite general, it is solely focused on how the Indian nationalism emerged in the nineteenth century in response to the British colonialism. In fact, for the most part of his book, Chatterjee is not even concerned with the whole of India, and all ethnic groups making up what could be called as 'Indian,' but the province of Bengal with Calcutta as its capital and the Hindus in the Bengal province speaking Bengali. In order to highlight the similarities and differences between India and Turkey, I shall have a look at a number of cases Chatterjee discusses in *The Nation and Its Fragments*.

#### *The Ilbert Bill Affair and the Question of Power and Authority in a Colonial Setting*

Of many events and cases Chatterjee discusses in *The Nation and Its Fragments*, the Ilbert Bill Affair is one of those that clearly reflects the division between the coloniser and the colonised, something the British tried to bury deep under their civilising discourse that claimed 'administering an impersonal, nonarbitrary system of rule of law.'<sup>161</sup> Accordingly, in 1882 Behari Lal Gupta, an Indian serving in the British colonial administration prepared a note about the

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<sup>161</sup> Chatterjee, P. (1993) *The Nation and Its Fragments*, p.20.

discrepancy between the Indian judges and the British judges. While British judges could preside over cases in which Europeans were tried in a court of law, the Indian judges could not. In 1883, a law was introduced by Ilbert to make the regulations conform to the 'universalist' standards of the rule of law. However, this law was met with such a high level of opposition by the Europeans in India that the colonial administration had to take a backward step, and return to the previous status quo.

In order to fully appreciate the deep nature of the question, let us consider if it would be possible in colonial India for an Indian to employ European servants or workers in his pay, or if an Indian civil servant could have a lower-ranking Englishman under his command. Although these questions are worth discussing by themselves, the Ilbert Bill affair that Chatterjee discusses points to the deeper issue of power, authority, and ultimately, of legitimacy and sovereignty.<sup>162</sup> The hierarchical boundary between the colonised and the coloniser in the colonial system was not as rigid as the one that existed in the slavery in the United States of America, nevertheless determining the limits of an Indian judge's *authority* over Europeans finally revealed the existence of a boundary. The European in question might be a high-ranking British civil servant or a lowly Dutch merchant, but the question was not whether the Indian judge in colonial service was at a higher or lower level compared to the defendants at his court. The real issue was whether a judge of Indian extraction had the authority to judge in the name of the British sovereign.

In the Ottoman Turkish case, the question of judicial authority and its relation to sovereignty takes on further importance, because as I will discuss below, justice was central in the Ottoman Turkish political tradition, comparable only to the position of liberty in the western political discourse. A well-known dictum, attributed to the second caliph of Islam, Omar, stated 'Justice is the foundation of sovereignty.' Today, this dictum adorns every courtroom in Turkey in large letters.

This brings us to an essential difference between the status of Ottoman Turkey and the colonised countries from the European perspective. As Thomas Naff observes, 'for half a millennium, from the 14<sup>th</sup> century until the 19<sup>th</sup>, the Ottoman Empire occupied, controlled, and administered one-quarter to one-third of the European continent.'<sup>163</sup> In the nineteenth century, the Ottomans controlled a sizable portion of southeastern Europe. The second Rome, the seat of the eastern part of the Roman Empire for more than a millennium, known to Europeans as Constantinople,

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<sup>162</sup> I devote Chapter Four to a lengthy discussion of Kemalist legitimization strategies, while I address the question of sovereignty in both Chapter Two and Chapter Three.

<sup>163</sup> Naff, T. (1984) "The Ottoman Empire and the European States System," in H. Bull and A. Watson (eds.) *The Expansion of International Society*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, p. 143. Quoted in Yurdusev, N. (2003) "Perceptions and Images in Turkish (Ottoman)-European Relations," in *Turkey's Foreign Policy in the 21st Century: A Changing Role in World Politics*, Ismael, T. Y. and Aydin, M. (eds.), Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, p. 78.



was the Ottoman Turkish capital, Istanbul. Even the parts of Ottoman Turkey that were traditionally considered to the East were no far-away lands –after all, it was the ‘Near East,’ and in the nineteenth century mindset these lands were the cradle of civilisation and the birthplace of the Judeo-Christian tradition. Of the five major patriarchates of Christianity, all but Rome was in the Ottoman Lands: Constantinople, Antioch, Jerusalem, Alexandria. All of the seven ancient churches mentioned Book of Revelation, including Ephesus and Pergamon, were in Turkey. From Tarsus, the birthplace of St Paul, to Nicea (modern İznik), where the famous Nicean creed was formulated at the Council of Nicea, the Ottoman Turkish geography was dotted with places that were familiar to all Europeans.

Furthermore, many Christian peoples, from the Bulgars, Rumenians, Serbs, Macedonians, and Vlachs, to Armenians, Greeks, Assyrians, and Maronites, as well as many Jewish communities were under Ottoman rule. While the British discussed whether Indian judges held authority to try Europeans, the Ottoman Turkish judges routinely exercised this authority over them. When two non-Muslim communities clashed in an Ottoman province, ‘the Ottoman vali took up the role of an *Arbiter mundi Ottomanorum*’.<sup>164</sup> The ‘blood libel’ accusations against the Jews in 1840 are a case in point. In 1840, the Greeks in Damascus and Rhodes caused a huge uproar and accused the Jews with kidnapping a Greek child and using his blood in the unleavened matzoh bread for use in their holy Passover rituals. In Rhodes, the Greeks were incited against the Jews by the European consuls, which was a source of embarrassment for the European statesmen for example Lord Palmerston, because the Europeans fell short of universal humanistic standards they were preaching to the Ottomans. Sir Moses Montefiore, a wealthy Jewish businessman from Britain, travelled to the Ottoman capital, had an audience with the Ottoman sultan, Abdülmecid, and secured a firman from him, stating the Jews’ innocence. This was a great achievement for Montefiore. In his formal portrait, he is dressed in the red uniforms of a British aristocrat and the Ottoman sultan’s firman is proudly displayed in the foreground.<sup>165</sup>

As quoted at the beginning of Bhabha’s article ‘Of Mimicry and Man,’ Sir Edward Cust wrote in 1839 reflecting on whether colonies should be given the same political rights as the ‘mother country’ and he famously concludes: ‘To give to a colony the forms of independence is a mockery; she would not be a colony for a single hour if she could maintain an independent station.’<sup>166</sup> Around the same time as Cust was writing these lines, the European statesmen were writing

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<sup>164</sup> Ortaylı, İ. (1999) *İmparatorluğun En Uzun Yüzyılı*, p. 155.

<sup>165</sup> On the Damascus and Rhodes libel incidents and Sir Moses Montefiore’s involvement, see Frankel, J. (1997) *The Damascus Affairs*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Green, A. (2010) *Moses Montefiore: Jewish Liberator, Imperial Hero*, Boston: Harvard University Press. The portrait in question is on the cover of A. Green’s book. It is currently displayed at the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue in London.

<sup>166</sup> Cust, E. (1839) “Reflections on West African affairs ... addressed to the Colonial Office,” Hatchard, London; Quoted in Bhabha, H. K. (1994) “Of Mimicry and Man,” p. 85.

letters to the Ottoman sultan, addressing him as 'His Majesty,' and corresponding with the Ottoman grand vizier and the foreign ministry, addressing them as 'His Excellency.' At the pain of stating the obvious, it must then be concluded that the Ottoman Empire and Turkey was never colonised.<sup>167</sup>

It may be argued that the 'capitulations,' namely, concessions granted by the Ottoman sultans to the European states placed European subjects in the Ottoman Empire at a privileged position, especially with the decline of the Ottoman power. Indeed, although capitulations had originally been granted with the intent of fostering trade and gaining European allies, in time the commercial privileges and tax exemptions became hurtful to the Ottoman economy, while the legal exemptions placed limits on the exercise of Ottoman sovereignty. However, it must be remembered that from a legal point of view, capitulations were not treaties conducted by two states having binding power in accordance with the principle of *Pacta Sund Servanda* of international relations. From the Ottoman Turkish point of view, the capitulations were guarantees of peace and security (*eman*), known as *ahdname*, given by the Ottoman sultan in the form of an imperial diploma (*berat*) carrying his signature (*tuğra*). As Halil İnalcık points out, 'the sultan retains authority to decide unilaterally when the *musta'min* [the foreigner whose security is guaranteed] has broken the pledge of "friendship and sincere goodwill (*ikhlas*)" and when in consequence the *ahdname* is rendered void.'<sup>168</sup> Hence, despite all the difficulties the capitulations created by the end of the Ottoman Empire, the Ottomans could still take retain a sense of authority and sovereignty.

At the Lausanne peace talks, the question of the capitulations and the status of the non-Muslims in Turkey were the source of long debates and disagreements. The European delegates argued that the Turkish legal system was based on the Islamic sharia, which delegated non-Muslims to an inferior status. In the eyes of the European delegates, the existence of such a two-tiered situation was not compatible with modern political notions of equality for all citizens. In the end, the European powers agreed to the abolition of the capitulations, while Turkey recognised the Greeks of Istanbul, the Armenians, and the Jews as minorities. Furthermore, some critics of Kemalism in Turkey, especially those in the Islamist camp, maintain that during the deliberations the Kemalists promised to move to a secular legal system.<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> Deringil, S. (2003) "'The Live in a State of Nomadism and Savagery': The Late Ottoman Empire and the Post-Colonial Debate," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 45, no. 2, p. 341; Bader, V. (2010) "Constitutionalizing secularism, alternative secularisms or liberal-democratic constitutionalism? A critical reading of some Turkish, ECtHR and Indian Supreme Court cases on 'secularism' " *Utrecht Law Review*, vol. 6, no. 3, p. 15.

<sup>168</sup> İnalcık, İ. (1986) "İmtiyazat," *Encyclopedia of Islam*, vol. 3, 2nd Edition, Leiden: Brill, p. 1179.

<sup>169</sup> Mısıroğlu, K. (1965) *Lozan Zafer mi Hezimet mi?*, İstanbul: Sebil Yay. Some authors even allege that along with the Lausanne Peace Treaty whose articles are known to all, a number of secret protocols have been

A frequently employed depiction of the emergence of nation as the pre-eminent basis of political community and nationalism as its cohesive discourse regards the nation as an 'imagined community,' in deference to the title of Benedict Anderson's classical book.<sup>170</sup> It has been seen time and again in the stories of many nation building processes and projects that the construction of a national historical narrative plays a significant role in the formation of nations. In his quest to decipher the complex relationship between the coloniser and the colonised, Chatterjee firstly challenges the conventional nationalist historiography in India, which claims that 'nationalism proper began in 1885 with the formation of the Indian National Congress.'<sup>171</sup> He then devotes two chapters of his book to a careful study of the history textbooks during the colonial period.<sup>172</sup>

Chatterjee places a special emphasis on *The History of India* of Tarinicharan Chattopadhyay, published in 1878, which is 'probably the most influential textbook read in Bengali schools in the second half of the nineteenth century.'<sup>173</sup> For Chatterjee, the publication of Chattopadhyay's history marks the beginning of anti-colonialist nationalism in India. Previous history books told the stories of the kings, rajas, sultans and emperors, who had ruled over India, from Ashoka to Babur, from Akbar to Queen Victoria, as separate and unconnected tales. Especially with respect to the Muslim rulers, they were treated as alien entities, with no recognition that their story was part of the 'History of India.' The first sentence of Chattopadhyay's history, however, signalled that his logic was entirely different: 'India has been ruled in turn by Hindus, Muslims and Christians. Accordingly, the history of this country is divided into the periods of Hindu, Muslim and Christian rule.'<sup>174</sup> As Chatterjee rightly points, 'this sentence marks the passage from the "history of kings" to the "history of this country."'

Just as Chattopadhyay marks the first period in Indian history as the Hindu period, the nationalist historiography that emerged in Turkey in late nineteenth century discovered and began to emphasise the pre-Islamic history of the Turks. In the Kemalist discourse, even more emphasis was put on this period, since it was assumed that a notion of 'pure Turkishness' could be discovered by going back to the pre-Islamic roots. Such an emphasis was also necessary to gloss

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signed, which include this promise to bring secularism to Turkey. Also see Eygi, M. Ş. (2007) "Eyvah!.. Lozan'ın Gizli Protokolları tehlikede," *Milli Gazete*, 23 August.

<sup>170</sup> Anderson, B. (1991) *Imagined communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, revised and extended ed., London: Verso.

<sup>171</sup> Chatterjee, P. (1993) *The Nation and Its Fragments*, p. 5.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 76-115.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid*, p. 94.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid*, p. 95.

over the Ottoman period and drive it to oblivion.<sup>175</sup> In Chatterjee's analysis of these histories of India, the end of the Hindu rule and the beginning of the Islamic rule is given a special treatment, since it was an important turning point. The military victories of the Ghaznavid rulers Nasruddin Sabuktigin in the period 977-997, and his son Mahmud Ghaznavi in the period 997-1030 are discussed as well as those of Shihabuddin Muhammad Ghuri in the period 1162-1206.<sup>176</sup>

The remarkable point here is that from the outset, most of the dynasties and military commanders coming to India from Central Asia via Afghanistan were considered as Turkish in the Turkish nationalist discourse. Mahmud Ghaznavi, who was regarded as one of the first Muslim conquerors of India in Indian nationalist historiographies in the nineteenth century, was considered around the same time as a great Turkish ruler in the emerging Turkish nationalist historiography. More importantly, the date 1040 was regarded by some nationalist Turkish historians in the 1930s as the date establishment of the state of Turkey, since on that year at the Battle of Dandakan the Seljuks won a major victory against Mesud, Mahmud Ghaznavi's son.<sup>177</sup> The interesting point here is that this battle took place near the modern border between Iran and Turkmenistan, far from both Turkey and India, yet through the Ghaznavids and the Seljuks, the nationalist histories of both countries were connected.

The end of Muslim rule in India is another significant turning point in the history books Chatterjee analyses and this time the Battle of Plassey in 1757 where the forces of the British East India Company decisively defeated Siraj-ud-daulah, the last independent nawab of Bengal.<sup>178</sup> The Battle of Plassey can be considered as the beginning of the 'Christian rule' in Chattopadhyay's terminology, or the onset of British colonialism. From then onwards, India can be said to have come under the influence of the West. For the Ottoman Turkey, the declaration of Tanzimat in 1839 can be considered as the beginning of westernisation, but then, Turkey was never colonised and this gave an altogether different dynamic to the Turkish modernisation.

Hence, the three periods of Hindu, Muslim and Christian rule in India in Chattopadhyay's categorisation have their parallels as the pre-Islamic, Islamic (Seljuk and Ottoman) and modernisation periods in Turkey.<sup>179</sup> Finally, the rise of nationalism as an anti-colonial movement in India can be viewed to correspond to the rise of Kemalism in Turkey. The crucial difference

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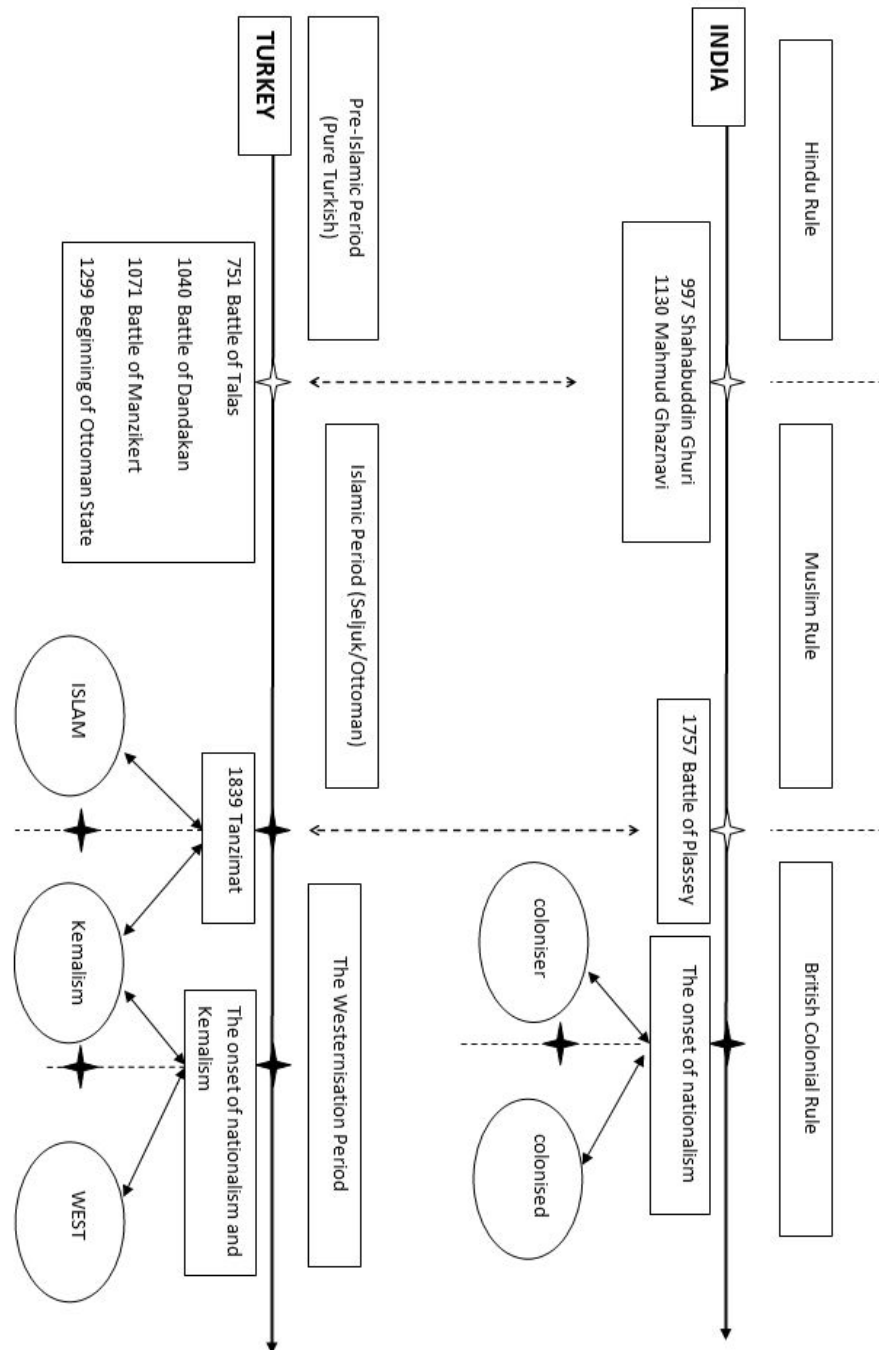
<sup>175</sup> As we shall see in Chapter Four, right around the time the Ottoman state was living its final years, the question 'How was the Ottoman Empire founded?' was being asked for the first time in modern historiography.

<sup>176</sup> Chatterjee, P. (1993) *The Nation and Its Fragments*, pp. 80-83.

<sup>177</sup> Bakirezer, G. (2002) "Atsız," in T. Bora (ed.), *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce: Cilt 4, Milliyetçilik*, p. 357.

<sup>178</sup> Chatterjee, P. (1993) *The Nation and Its Fragments*, pp. 84-85.

<sup>179</sup> While Indian nationalism was strongly tied to India as the mother country, there was an extraterritorial dimension of Turkish nationalism, distinct from a patriotism for Turkey, since Turks were seen as having



**Figure 4: Parallels in the Periodisations in India and Turkey**

The three periods of Hindu, Muslim and Islamic rule in India may be compared to the Pre-Islamic, Islamic and Westernisations periods in Turkey. Because Muslim rule in India could not provide a basis for the Indian nationalism, the significance of 1757 was downplayed which meant the only source of antagonism was between the coloniser and the colonised. In the Turkish case, however, the Islamic tradition was much stronger and more relevant, emphasising the importance of 1839 as a turning point. This led to the rise of two antagonisms, which produced three main elements: Islam, Kemalism, and the West.

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come to Anatolia after the Battle of Manzikert in 1071. Another turning point could be the Battle of Talas in 751, which was conventionally taken as the start of the conversion of Turks to Islam.

between India and Turkey is that for the Hindu nationalists, Muslim rule in India that preceded the British colonial rule was itself a kind of pre-modern colonial rule, hence the political organisation, culture and habits of that period could not be taken as a model for the new, nationalist India that they strived to build. This meant that the only 'enemy' they had to confront was the British colonialists. In Turkey, on the other hand, despite all Kemalist attempts to discredit the Ottoman period, it had a much stronger relevance and familiarity for everyone. In fact, this thesis argues that Islam was the central problem for Kemalism, and the relationship between Islam and Kemalism was much stronger and much more important than the one between Kemalism and the West.

This brings us to the same conclusion as the one above with respect to mimicry and mockery. The post-colonial theory is concerned with two main elements: the coloniser and the colonised. Any study of Kemalism and Turkey, however, needs to take into account three elements: the West, Kemalism, and Islam.

#### *The Black as 'Other' in Fanon vs the Turk as 'Other' in the Turkish/Kemalist Case*

Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* tells the stark truth of the binary opposition 'White vs Black' in a haunting way. Fanon is incensed that as a black man, he cannot have an independent identity. His blackness is always defined with respect to, or in Fanon's terms, 'in relation to' the white man. It is worth quoting Fanon verbatim at this point: 'Ontology—once it is finally admitted as leaving existence by the wayside—does not permit us to understand the being of the black man. For not only must the black man be black; he must be black in relation to the white man. Some critics will take it on themselves to remind us that this proposition has a converse. I say that this is false. The black man has no ontological resistance.'<sup>180</sup> Hence it turns out that 'White vs Black' is not a binary opposition at all. The white man does not need the black man for his identity, whereas the black man's identity is completely dependent on and given by the white man.

In Chapter One, I have discussed how the Ottoman Turkish identity was taken up in Europe as representing the 'Other' in the centuries-long rivalry going back to the time of the Crusades. Besides being enemies, the Ottomans represented a possible alternative to the existing political arrangement in Europe. As Goffman notes, Martin 'Luther in fact acknowledges that there exist those who "actually want the Turk to come and rule because they think our German people are

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<sup>180</sup> Fanon, F. (2008) *Black Skin, White Masks*, pp. 82-83.

wild and uncivilized –indeed that they are half-devil and half-man.’<sup>181</sup> The European observers’ reports about the Ottomans and the reports of Ottoman ambassadors to Europe all attest to the fact that during the heyday of Ottoman power, the Ottoman Turks were confident in their culture and felt that their faith, customs and habits were superior to those of the Europeans. ‘In the sixteenth century the Turks, as described by [Richard] Knolles with some timid admiration and considerable awe, were proud and sure of themselves and held the rest of the world in scorn, with a full persuasion in time to rule over all without limits or bounds.’<sup>182</sup>

Obviously, as the Ottoman power declined, the self-confidence of the Ottoman Turks was weakened. For Yalçın Küçük, the turning point was the Treaty of Karlowitz in 1699, when the Ottomans lost sizable territories in Europe for the first time, and when they were forced to recognise the Habsburgs as their equals: ‘After the Treaty of Karlowitz Turkish civil servants understood that when they wrote a letter to a western King they could no longer write to that king as if they were a small less important authority (they used to write, ‘you merely the King’). From then onwards, the Turks slowly began to lose the ability to define beauty in their own understanding of the term, from now on the definition of beauty only came from the West. From that time onwards they lost a sense of their own humanity (as they had lost their own sense of judgement).’<sup>183</sup> The ‘loss of beauty’ Yalçın Küçük describes can be understood on a number of different ways, some at the ontic and some at the ontological levels.

If the ‘loss of beauty’ is taken as the loss of the traditional way of life, then the ‘loss of beauty’ would become an inevitable outcome of modernisation. It could also be understood as the loss of a reference frame with respect to which everything else acquired meaning. As Chatterjee asserts in *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World*, nationalist thought operates ‘within a framework of knowledge whose representational structure corresponds to the very of power it seeks to repudiate.’<sup>184</sup> Even though not a single skirmish took place between the occupying forces of the Allied Powers and the Turkish forces, the Kemalist discourse victory against the Greeks at the end of the National Resistance in 1922 as a victory against the West. Nevertheless, when it came to build a new political and social framework for Turkey, Kemalism would look to the West unhesitatingly and mimic the western model by fighting against the Ottoman Turkish identity and tradition through secularism.

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<sup>181</sup> Luther, M. (1529) “On war against the Turk,” in *Luther’s works* (1967) vol. XLVI: *The Christian in society*, III, pp. 174-175; Quoted in Goffman, D. (2004) *The Ottoman Empire and Early Modern Europe*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 109-110.

<sup>182</sup> Karpat, K. (2002) “The Ottoman Rule in Europe from the Perspective of 1994,” in *Studies on Ottoman Social and Political History: Selected Articles and Essays*, Leiden: Brill, p. 489.

<sup>183</sup> Küçük, Y. (2003) *Tekelistan*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition, Istanbul: YGS Yayınları, p. 7.

<sup>184</sup> Chatterjee, P. (1993) *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, p. 29.

Finally, the 'loss of beauty' could also be interpreted as the 'loss of identity.' The colonial situation could then provide some insights into the question of identity, as I have done partially with respect to mimicry and mockery as I have discussed above. A similar exposition of the 'loss of beauty' can be found in Fanon's work: 'Every colonized people—in other words, every people in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality—finds itself face to face with the language of the civilizing nation; that is, with the culture of the mother country.'<sup>185</sup> For Fanon, the 'loss of beauty' is a totality that knows no boundaries. What Fanon refers to as the 'local cultural originality' corresponds to tradition in the framework of this thesis, and in Fanon's experience, nothing is left of that tradition. The ultimate aim of the Kemalist discourse was to achieve a similar annihilation on a voluntary basis, however, the continual occupation of Kemalism with Islam through its secularist ideology, as I shall discuss in detail in Chapter Three, both pointed out towards that ultimate aim and the incompleteness of that mission.

### **The Double Discourses of Kemalism between the Social and the Political**

Now, I would like to give some examples of double discourses in operation in Kemalism with respect to various topics. Apart from carrying illustrative powers themselves, these examples will help me underline a very important characteristic of the double discourse in Kemalism, because the two discourses that form the double discourse are not a simple amalgamation of a modernising discourse and a premodern, traditional discourse. It's not the case that Kemalism was modernising and progressive in certain areas, while it lingered on to the traditional forms in certain other areas. My argument is that in every issue, the two discourses were operational at the same time, although they operated at different levels. There was an apparent level, one that was most visible and readily identifiable with modernisation. At the same time it was more superfluous and was mainly concerned with appearances. I am inclined to call this level as 'the social.' Yet, there was a deeper, underlying level, which was not elaborated with fanfare in Kemalism, as the first level had been, but which was crucial in determining the political concepts and the parameters of the political debate in general, hence I am inclined to call this second level as 'the political.'

At this point, I must clarify what I am trying to allude to by 'the political' and 'the social.' Here, by 'the political,' I understand the terrain shaped by 'power, conflict and antagonism,'<sup>186</sup> and 'the

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<sup>185</sup> Fanon, F. (2008) *Black Skin, White Masks*, p. 9.

<sup>186</sup> Mouffe, C. (2006) *On the Political*, London and New York: Routledge, p. 9.



dimension of antagonism that is inherent in human relations, antagonism that can take many forms and emerge in different types of social relations.<sup>187</sup> Whenever there is a human dimension to an issue, whenever we start talking about more than one person, and taking into account the infinitude of possible human relations at every scale, there is the ever-present possibility that disagreement, debate, and conflict might arise. The concept of the political captures this essential quality of human nature.

On the other hand, I understand 'the social' as the realm of established practices, which 'conceal the originary acts of their contingent political institution.'<sup>188</sup> The social then becomes 'as the ensemble of social relations that establishes a horizon for meaning and action, which is recursively validated by the social agents and thus possesses a relatively enduring character.'<sup>189</sup> The crucial insight here is that the political origins of the elements in the social might be concealed, but they always carry the potential to be re-activated and become points of contention.

#### *The Kemalist Reforms and the Re-Activation of the Social*

The Kemalist reforms attempted to change both the social and the political in a radical and traumatic way, but the Kemalists also expected the changes to be sedimented automatically, without any opposition or conflict. They never took into account that the brand new social they were trying to impose could face rejection. In this section I shall illustrate the extent to which Kemalist reforms have disturbed the social in Turkey in the area of language.

One of the most ambitious aspects of the Kemalist language reform was to cleanse Turkish of loanwords from foreign languages. Ostensibly, this covered all languages, but most importantly, Arabic and Persian. However, vocabulary borrowed from these languages also formed the main vocabulary of Islam in Turkish. Hence throwing away Arabic and Persian origin words and replacing them with 'pure Turkish' counterparts, either through rediscovery of old Turkish words, new word derivations using the existing grammatical rules, or outright fabrication, seemed as an important aspect of 'secularisation' to the Kemalists.

As I shall study the 'old vs new Turkish' word pair *muasır* and *çağdaş*, both meaning modern and contemporary, they are both used in modern Turkish, with no meaningful distinction and no nuance in between, since the latter was intended to take the place of the former, but the former somehow managed to cling on. This has created a strange situation in modern Turkish with lots of

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<sup>187</sup> Mouffe, C. (2000) *The Democratic Paradox*, London and New York: Verso, p. 101.

<sup>188</sup> Mouffe, C. (2006) *On the Political*, p. 17.

<sup>189</sup> Torfing, J. (1999) *New Theories of Discourse: Laclau, Mouffe and Zizek*, Blackwell: Oxford, p. 70.

word-pairs having the exact same meaning, but neither member of the pair succeeding to make the other redundant. One then frequently encounters people speaking of '*muasır* and *çağdaş* civilisation,' whose literal translation could only be 'modern and modern civilisation.' To make matters worse, a similar word-pair has been created through *medeniyet* and *uygarlık*, both of whom simply mean civilisation. Hence, one could speak of '*muasır medeniyet*' or '*çağdaş uygarlık*,' and though a bit distasteful, one could even speak of '*muasır uygarlık*' or '*çağdaş medeniyet*' yet they would all mean 'modern civilisation.' Of course, the absence of any *literal* difference at origin does not imply the absence of *political* difference. Someone insisting on using *muasır* would be making a political statement that he has high regard for the Ottoman tradition, and he is being critical of Kemalism, at least on the topic of language reform. It is likely that he would not for the RPP in the elections. Likewise, someone making a conscious effort to use *çağdaş* all the time and not use *muasır* anytime would be making a political statement that he blames the Ottoman period for 'leaving Turkey lagging behind modern civilisation', and he is an ardent supporter of Kemalism, at least in the area of language reform.

The antagonism in language is not just restricted to the choice of words from the 'old vs new' word pairs. The customary daily greetings, one of the very first things students of a new language learn, were made a battleground by Kemalism, since they were heavily imbued with Islamic terminology. Traditionally, one would say the Islamic greeting 'May peace be upon you' ('*Esselamü aleyküm*') upon meeting a friend, and say 'We have entrusted you to God' ('*Allaha ısmarladık*') as a farewell. The Kemalists tried to replace the Islamic greeting with a newly invented 'Good morning' ('*Günaydın*') or 'Good afternoon' ('*Tünaydın*'). Today, we may safely say that the Kemalist invention for 'Good afternoon' has not caught on; anyone uttering the phrase risks being met with a funny smile. However, even the new 'Good morning' phrase is not purely secular; it is a short hand for the prayer 'May your day be bright' ('*Gününüz aydın olsun*'), which in turn is a rendering of a more ornate (and more Islamic-looking) prayer 'May your holy morning be blessed' ('*Sabah-ı şerifleriniz hayr olsun*'). But then, uttering a prayer as greeting would not fit into the Kemalist mindset, and such a presumption, which is commonly made in Turkey, leaves the idea of prayer fully in the religious (Islamic) domain, and renders Kemalist secularism as an irreligious lifestyle.

A well known anecdote on the use of religious terminology in political propaganda, and whether this constitutes a breach of secularism or not, involves İsmet İnönü, the second president of Turkey and chairman of the Republican People Party after Atatürk's death in 1938 until 1973. According to the anecdote, after the RPP lost elections to the Democrat Party in 1950, İnönü was under some pressure by his advisers to counter the DP's open use of religious terminology during the election campaigns. The public speeches of İnönü, who is represented in the Kemalist

discourse as a statesman who was extra careful in keeping his religious sentiments private and not appear to 'abuse' religious sensibilities of the people for political advantage, were strictly 'secular' in the sense that they were notoriously devoid of any religious references. Before one particular public meeting, İnönü's advisers asked him to mention *Allah* in his speech and pepper it with religious terms. So İnönü appeared on the platform, started giving his speech. The advisers were eagerly waiting for him to mention God, or quote a well known verse from the Koran or the sayings of the Prophet, but they were waiting in vain. In the end, İnönü said goodbye and stepped off the platform. The advisers were stunned, and asked İnönü why he did not mention God. He replied: 'I did say 'We have entrusted you to God' ('*Allaha ısmarladık*'), didn't I?' This anecdote, frequently quoted by Kemalist polemicists against the abuse of religious sensibilities by right-wing politicians, shows that Kemalist secularism was prepared to allow the appearance of religion in the public sphere only as much as saying 'Goodbye.'

Likewise, insistence on sticking to the older forms of greeting is considered as an indirect but at the same time more sinister critique against Kemalism. For example, that 'he always says '*Selamün aleyküm*' when greeting people' is a frequent 'proof' in the Kemalist newspapers for the presumed regressive and hence anti-Kemalist stance of a politician or bureaucrat.

What we see is that the Kemalist reforms have rendered the whole language as the terrain of conflict and antagonism, hence language is now properly in the domain of the political. This is a typical example of the re-activation of the social, and Kemalism is all about this re-activation.

These competing word-pairs form just a part of the two faces of the modern Turkish language, which can be taken as a sign of the existence two different lifestyles or worldviews in Turkey, leading many observers to state that there are 'two Turkeys.' One could argue that such classifications could be made for many countries, first and foremost the USA, with its 'red' and 'blue' states. Yet, in Turkey's case, the fact that the divisions have come down to the level of signifiers, when one side insists on calling an opportunity as *imkan* (an Arabic loanword) while the other as *olanak* (a new word invented in the 1930s), does not give much hope for a constructive dialogue to flourish. It is normal and even desirable in a democratic society to have debates on the meaning of such foundational political concepts as democracy, civil rights, rule of law, plurality, secularism, etc, but when the basic building blocks of such a dialogue, that is the whole vocabulary of the language becomes a battleground, on what basis will such a debate arise? This is the trauma that the Turkish society has been facing for a long time, and it is a trauma deliberately set upon by Kemalism.

For example, with respect to the women's rights, the Kemalist discourse claims women of Turkey were the first in the world to acquire the right to vote and stand as candidates in 1934. Notwithstanding the historical inaccuracy in the identification that Turkey was 'the first' in women's suffrage, this portrayal serves to obscure the fact that there had already been a well developed women's movement in Turkey in the 1920s. After the establishment of republic, members of a women's association visited Mustafa Kemal and demanded for their suffrage, but their demand was rejected at that time, on the grounds that the contemporary political situation was not suitable. Then, in 1933, the women's associations were closed down by the government along with all other associations. There were indeed a few examples of women elected to parliament and local councils, but firstly their numbers were never sufficiently high to make an impact, and secondly, theirs were more of an 'appointment' than true 'elections.'

In the 1920s, Mustafa Kemal had a short-lived marriage to Latife Hanım, an educated woman from a well-known merchant family in Izmir, but it was also filled with disagreements and heated discussions. Latife Hanım saw herself as an independent, proud wife of the Turkish leader, and she wanted to accompany Mustafa Kemal everywhere. But Mustafa Kemal's vision for his wife was much more traditional and limited. When these mutually incompatible positions came to a clash, Mustafa Kemal divorced his wife unilaterally, in accordance with the stipulations of sharia, while she was away in her hometown. In order to fix the situation, the government was forced to issue a specific law, dealing with the president's divorce case.

In summary, Kemalism was all for women's emancipation, but it mostly entailed them putting off their veils, attending balls in lavish gowns, and dancing with men, especially with Mustafa Kemal. The modernising discourse was cut short when it came to granting women real rights and then, the second component of the double discourse came into play.

*Positivist and Rationalist Aspects of Kemalism vs the Exaggerated Adoration of Atatürk*

One important aspect of Kemalism is its heavy emphasis on rationality and taking the scientific principles as the only reference. Mustafa Kemal's famous statement that 'the truest guide in life is science and technology' was the clearest declaration that there would be no place for the superstitions and ignorant beliefs in the new Turkey. On 1 November 1937, in his opening speech of the parliament, he said 'It is known by the whole world that our main programme in administration is the programme of the Republican People Party. The principles are the illuminating lines in administration and politics for us. However, one should not equate these

principles with the dogmas of the books that are supposed to come from the heavens. We have taken our inspiration not from the heavens and from the hidden world, but directly from life.’<sup>190</sup> By the ‘books that are supposed to come from the heavens,’ he was clearly referring to the Qur’an, but he probably had in his mind the superstitious beliefs in Islam he thought to be in violation of scientific principles. Hence, the Kemalist pledge of allegiance to science and rationality was at the same time an attack against Islam.

I have already discussed Mustafa Kemal’s famous declaration, ‘the truest guide in life is science and technology’ in Chapter One, and I have argued that even in this declaration, the word he used for ‘guide’ had mystical and spiritual connotations. In similar fashion, when he categorically declared his opposition to the existence of Sufi orders and dervishes in modern Turkey, he likened the union of civilised people to a Sufi order, but this was ‘the most correct and the truest order.’ This is an excellent illustration to a point I made in Chapter Three: ‘This made the task of establishing the secularist discourse doubly difficult, because even the secularist discourse itself had to be explained within the discursive horizon of Islam, that is, the very thing it was trying to replace.’ We may already discern the existence of a double discourse in the ‘doubly difficult task of establishing a secularist discourse,’ however my main point in this section will be slightly different.

The difficulty with ascribing a fully positivistic and rationalist position to Kemalism arises when we consider the excessive exaltation of Mustafa Kemal, elevating him above the level of mere mortals and even making him a deity in his own right. In some later, apologist Kemalist works, the beginning of this development is dated to after Atatürk’s death and it is regarded as a shortcoming of the people to appreciate his greatness. However, there is ample evidence to suggest the widespread existence of exaltation in Mustafa Kemal’s lifetime. Such exaltations are sometimes so exaggerated that they cannot be reconciled with the modern mode of thinking, whose chief attributes are having a critical attitude towards the universe and doubting everything until rigorously proven.

A glaring example from August 1928 is a poster, titled ‘The new Catechism of the Turk,’ (*Türk’ün Yeni Amentüsü*) which was modelled after the Islamic Catechism:

‘I hereby declare my faith in Mustafa Kemal, who is the epitome of heroism and who has created the independence of homeland from nothing, in his brave army, in his exalted laws, in mothers of the freedom fighters, and in that there is no Judgement Day for Turkey. I hereby declare that I am a witness with all sincerity of my heart that the good and the bad comes from humans, that my great nation shall acquire the greatest position in the civilised world, to the unity of the Turkish

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<sup>190</sup> The text of the speech is available at the Turkish Grand National Assembly website: [http://www.tbmm.gov.tr/tarihce/ataturk\\_konusma/5d3yy.htm](http://www.tbmm.gov.tr/tarihce/ataturk_konusma/5d3yy.htm) (Last accessed 28 February 2010).

army that has filled history with stories of valour, and to the fact that Gazi is the most loved servant of God.'

This catechism directly refutes some fundamental tenets of Islamic Catechism, for example, the Islamic belief that 'the good and the bad comes from God,' and that 'the Judgement Day shall come.' But most importantly, the Islamic catechism refers to Muhammad, as 'God's servant and messenger,' whereas this catechism replaces Muhammad with Mustafa Kemal.

A famous poem from the 1930s declares: 'Let Ka'aba [in the holy city of Mecca in Arabia] belong to Arabs, Çankaya is enough for us.' Ka'aba is the cube-shaped building at the centre of the holy mosque in Mecca, believed by Muslims to be constructed by the Patriarch Abraham and his son Ishmael. Muslims throughout the world face Ka'aba when praying. In the poem, Çankaya refers to Mustafa Kemal's residence in Ankara. Hence, the poem attributes such a holy status to Mustafa Kemal that his residence is seen to be more sacred than the holiest shrine of Islam.

It is very easy to increase the number of these examples, but my main argument stays the same: Around the same time the Kemalist discourse was attacking Islam in the name of attacking superstitions and opening the way for science and rationality, it was creating a new set of dogmas, a new set of superstitions, or one could even say, a new religion. Again we see the double discourse in operation, the first one, ostensibly modern refers to science, to intellectual reason, but only as far as those concepts enable it to attack Islam. The second discourse that is simultaneously operational with the first one, however, runs at a deeper level, and contradicts the first one.

In a certain sense, the double discourse of Kemalism runs between Islam and the West. As Ümit Cizre Sakallıoğlu notes, the Kemalist 'republican strategy was to adopt an official double discourse. Islam was disestablished as the state religion while religious language was incorporated into the nationalist discourse, without making its conceptual grammar essentially Islamic. Islam was depicted as the inferior other in order to allow the diffusion of its antithesis into a Western self.'<sup>191</sup>

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<sup>191</sup> Sakallıoğlu, Ü.C. (1998) "Rethinking the connections between Turkey's "Western" identity versus Islam," *Middle East Critique*, Vol. 7, No. 12, p. 16.

## **Kemalism: Rupture or Continuity? Reform or Revolution?**

When we look at various attempts to analyse Kemalism, we see a contradiction. Some analyses emphasise that Kemalism was a 'rupture,' which resulted in Turkey's complete break with its Ottoman past. For them, the continuing reverence of Atatürk by the Turkish people is testimony to the enduring appeal of Kemalism. Yet, others point out the continuities with the Ottoman past and the limits of Kemalism. They underline the fact that Kemalist reforms were mostly confined to the big cities and to a limited elite circle and that their effect on the vast stretches of Anatolian countryside was restricted. To counter the popularity of the cult of Atatürk, this line of thinking points out that Atatürk's party, the RPP, has not been able to win a single free election throughout. Why could it be that Kemalism appears so different under different lights? The answer lies in the observation that what Kemalism actually accomplished and what it *claims* it did differs vastly. In fact, Kemalism claims to have accomplished something impossible, which seems to have affected a lot of observers and their analyses.

Kemalism claims that it has changed the course of history as far as Turkey and the Turks are concerned. Accordingly, it succeeded to create a modern nation-state out of the ashes of a decayed empire. It enacted so many reforms in such short time that no one would ever believe as possible. It voluntarily gave up all Ottoman imperial claims beyond the borders of Turkey. It abolished the Caliphate, which could be used as a symbolic power to garner diplomatic advantages to Turkey, but which could then compromise the nation-state project. Kemalism believes that all these gave Turkey sufficient reasons to make a fresh start and completely leave behind the historical luggage. In this regard, the Lausanne Treaty was the opening of a new chapter in Turkey's relations with the West. According to the Kemalist interpretation, the Lausanne Treaty was the founding agreement between Turkey and the West. From the capitulations to the status of non-Muslim minorities, Lausanne sealed Turkey's acceptance as a proud member of the international community. In fact, it is impossible to conceive of a situation with complete disregard of the historical background, but this is what Kemalism thinks it has accomplished. This may well be the most naive embrace of modernism.

From the outset, Kemalism was confident that the reforms carried out in Turkey would radically transform the country and bring it on par with European, or 'civilised' countries. Kemalism sincerely believed that it could achieve a complete eradication of all negative aspects of the Ottoman past and that its efforts would be appreciated by the west. Consequently, Kemalism believed that Turkey could establish relations with the European nations without the baggage of old hatreds and enmities. Atatürk's motto 'Peace at home, peace in the world' became the cornerstone of Turkish foreign policy, in the sense that Turkey tried to steer from conflict as much as possible to the degree of over-cautiousness and pacification.

### *Kemalism and the 'Forgotten War'*

After the establishment of the Turkish Republic, the War for National Liberation, which was made to have started with Mustafa Kemal's arrival at Samsun on 19 May 1919, was heavily emphasised, while the Ottoman Turkish involvement in the World War I was minimised or obscured. When one considers that according to official figures, the total number of Turkish casualties throughout the liberation war (1919-1922) amounted to about 10 thousand, while during the World War I, the Turkish losses in just one theater, Çanakkale, was conventionally stated as 250 thousand, it becomes even more sensational to note that in the republican Turkey, World War I effectively became a 'forgotten war.' This is another example of the degree to which the Kemalist discourse was prepared to go in order to emphasise its claim to rupture.

World War I represented an inconvenience that the Kemalist discourse had to do away with, in its effort to rewrite history. In the official historical narrative, the Great War, as World War I had come to be known throughout the world, was reduced to a preparation ground for Mustafa Kemal's rise and the CUP leaders' fall.

To accomplish the former objective, Mustafa Kemal was slowly made the sole hero of the Çanakkale battles, although he had been just a lieutenant colonel at the time, and if the story was to be told from a military history perspective, there were many other heroes to be counted in. But even then, the remembrance of the Çanakkale battles was left to the same old tired commemorations every year on 18 March.<sup>192</sup> If we remember that the completion of the commemorative Turkish monument at Çanakkale had to wait until 1973, we can appreciate the degree of 'voluntary amnesia,' from which even the most glorious aspect of the Ottoman past could escape.

In order to underline the CUP leaders' incompetence, the decision to enter the war on the side of the Germans was presented as a grave mistake, which, according to the narrative, Mustafa Kemal strongly opposed and stated his preference for an alliance with Britain. What this interpretation conveniently forgot is that the Ottoman Turkish statesmen, ever since the Tanzimat period, had been trying to get into an alliance with the British-the benefits of such an alliance were clearly seen by everyone but when the territories under Ottoman rule formed the main bone of contention, what the Ottoman Turks thought about alliances mattered little. In the immediate aftermath of the 1908 revolution, when the real power holders of the CUP preferred to stay in

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<sup>192</sup> Remarkably, 18 March 1915 was the date when the Allied fleet made a disastrous attempt to pass the Çanakkale Strait, and that had been the traditional date of commemoration in Turkey. The bloody land battles happened only after this failure, and the battles in which Mustafa Kemal took part happened in August.



the dark, their first choice for grand vizier had been Said Paşa, who was known for his pro-British views. The CUP leaders did everything they could to secure a British alliance, but their efforts were not met with a positive response. During that fateful summer of 1914, Britain's decision to confiscate two Ottoman warships built in the British shipyards, which were completely paid for by public subscription, proved the final undoing and forced Enver Paşa to ally with the Germans.

Admittedly, World War I had been a disaster for the Ottoman Empire, but wasn't it a disaster for *all* participants? In October 1918, Ottoman Turkish armies were still fighting on battlefields, whereas Russia, Austria-Hungary, and Serbia had long ago given up the fight. In the Iraq front, the Ottoman Turkish forces had won a remarkable victory against the British forces at Kut-al-Amara in 1915-16, taking more than 13 thousand troops as POW, including General Townshend, the highest ranking British soldier captured during the whole war. The Turkish commander had been Halil Paşa, Enver's uncle, hence, remembering this episode would imply associating heroism and bravery with Enver, with whom Mustafa Kemal had been in a bitter rivalry. Therefore, not much was said or written about the Kut during the Republican period. In contrast, the disastrous Sarıkamış expedition in the winter of 1914-15, in which thousands of Turkish troops were frozen to death in the Allahüekber Mountains,<sup>193</sup> was presented as the ultimate example of Enver's incompetence and boundless ambition. It is worth remembering that the first large scale public commemorations of the Sarıkamış expedition were held only a few years ago. This shows that Turkey is slowly moving away from the grasp of the Kemalist rhetoric, which should have happened a long time ago.

### *The Kemalist Obsession for Change and Progress*

Kemalism was so confident in its power to completely transform Turkish society that it did not hesitate in throwing out the age old customs, traditions, and cultural practices. When the alphabet reform was being debated, one common argument in favour of preserving the Arabic script went like this: 'Arabic script has been used for nearly one thousand years. Libraries are full of manuscripts books written in Arabic. This constitutes the backbone of our literature, our history, and our culture. If the alphabet is changed, no one will be able to access this heritage.' The Kemalists responded that that most of that heritage had become irrelevant, that it had kept Turkey backwards anyway and it deserved jettisoning, and claimed that even if there were a number of books worthy of reading in Arabic script they could easily be transcribed in the new script. The Kemalists argued that the world was undergoing rapid changes thanks to the scientific

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<sup>193</sup> In the Kemalist discourse, the Turkish losses were conventionally stated to be at 90 thousand, but recent historical research has indicated that actual numbers were much less, at about 45 thousand, which included all deaths, including disease.

and technological advances and the economic and social developments; hence it was much more important to be able to catch up with the zeitgeist of the times than to preserve a tradition that was slipping away faster and faster.

This obsession with change, reform and development resulted in a significant cost, though. A cursory glance over the history of the modern 'revolutions' from the French Revolution to the Russian Revolution and to the Maoist 'Cultural Revolution,' should be sufficient to establish that a political group or party might seize power and put into place a revolutionary programme, but no matter how radical or revolutionary its programme might be, it can *never* control the outcome of that programme in its totality. This does not mean that it is impossible to change a human society. Change can be initiated, and its natural pace can be hastened by drastic measures, but it can never be fully kept under control. In other words, it is impossible to affect social engineering. Kemalism has been in denial of this basic observation about the nature of the political.

This denial acts at a deeper level than the Kemalist reforms or the Kemalist discourse, because it prevents a healthy debate—any debate to be constructed, in the absence of which all accounts of Kemalism are bound to be thrown away, either towards complete rejection or complete identification. This is a traumatic condition from which Kemalism continually nourishes. But then, could we say that Kemalism is still an influential and powerful discourse in Turkey? Perhaps so, but this is rather a 'destructive' influence. Kemalism has been unable to assert a monopoly in determining the political for a long time. No political party whose primary ideological allegiance was Kemalism has ever been able to win the popular vote in free elections in Turkey. Yet, Kemalism has been able to limit the power of the ruling political parties. It has been able to arrest the natural flow of the political currents through various interventions, including but not restricted to the military coups. Finally, Kemalism has been solely responsible in preventing Turkey to come to terms with its history and tradition.

### **Kemalist Discourse and the Superstructure**

When we look at the so-called 'Kemalist revolutions,' we see that changing the script, embracing the western hat and clothing, banning the traditional music and promoting western classical music, and generally promoting a western life style ranks high in the list of achievements. For this reason, Kemalism has been frequently criticised as having an understanding of reform that was limited to the 'wardrobe.' That criticism was not only picked up by those situating themselves outside the Kemalist camp; many staunch Kemalists, especially those called as *left-Kemalists*

criticised a government version of Kemalism and called it 'wardrobe Atatürkism.' It is true that Kemalism enacted some significant reforms in the spheres of public administration, law, and civil rights, but the degree to which these reforms translated into practice and resulted in a transformation of Turkey's fabric has not been analysed sufficiently. Again, we see that Kemalism's rhetoric has overshadowed the reality.

It is remarkable that many of the accounts of the foundation of modern Turkey, being historical in their approach and chronological in their narrative, has not even considered approaching the topic from a perspective to uncover the underlying dynamics. In these accounts, we don't see a discussion on the class structure, or the modes and relations of production, before and after the Kemalist reforms, and how, or if, these changed in the meantime. This is an indication that Kemalism has mainly been pre-occupied with the superstructure, and it has not ventured into the base.

When we look at the history of modernisation in Western Europe, we see that the bourgeoisie had been the driving force. In Turkey, there was not a sufficiently developed bourgeoisie in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, so the bureaucracy had to play the role of the modernising agent. The Tanzimat reforms had been started by such Ottoman statesmen as Mustafa Reşid Paşa, Ali Paşa, and Fuad Paşa, who had been graduates of the Sublime Porte's Translation Bureau. The Young Ottomans, the Young Turks, and then the ranks of the Committee of Union Progress had all been filled by the bureaucrats in public service. With Kemalism the situation was the same.

Throughout the nineteenth century, civil servants had played a more prominent role, but from the Second Constitutional Period onwards, the military officers provided the means of carrying out reforms by force to the cause of reform. The continuities with the Ottoman period are obvious. The Turkish word for a public official is *memur*, which means someone who receives order. Although the word is of Arabic origin, it was not touched by the language reform.

The concept of a public official, being a *civil servant*, that is, someone serving the state which is nothing but a political organisation founded to serve the needs and interests of civil society, was missing in Turkey. In the republican period, the public officials were tied to a social security organisation which provided a much better deal than those for the workers or the self-employed. The public officials had a certain degree of legal immunity; permission had to be given by their superiors before they could be tried in a court of law. Remarkably the source of this immunity was a law passed in 1914 under the CUP regime. While Kemalism was busy enacting reforms to

change the face of Turkey, it did not find any necessity to repel this law at all, which had to wait until 1999 for a new wave of reforms to comply with EU acquis.<sup>194</sup>

It is true that the establishment of the new regime in Turkey brought about a large scale purge of bureaucrats, academics and intellectuals. Some of those who fell from power had been tied too closely to the Istanbul government during the national war for liberation, some could not shake off their loyalty to the sultan and the caliph, and some could not simply make the transition from Istanbul to Ankara. They were relegated to unimportant positions, brought into early retirement, or even forced to flee the country altogether. The higher ranking and influential individuals, who had the temerity to challenge Mustafa Kemal's power, were eliminated in different ways, ranging from banishment to obscurity to accusations of treason and even execution.

In 1933, a large scale operation was carried out at the premier higher education institute in Istanbul. When it proved too difficult to enforce change on an individual level, the whole organisation, which had been running under the name *Darulfünun* was closed down overnight. In its place, a brand new institution, named Istanbul University was established the next day, but in the meantime, the contracts of many 'old mentality' professors were not renewed. Now, Kemalism presented this change in the cadres as another proof of that Turkey's face was changing and radical reforms were under way. The problem was that during the passage from the Ottoman to the republican period, the *functions* these cadres performed had not changed at all.

Throughout the nineteenth century, the most successful aspect of Ottoman modernisation had been its increasing ability to control the provinces. This centralizing effect only strengthened in the republican period. The dependent position of academia on the government had remained the same. The academia primarily served to justify and legitimate the policies of the new regime. The reason for the 1933 operation at Istanbul University was clearly stated as 'the inability of the old academia to serve the needs of the 'revolution'.' On the super-structural level of people and institutions there certainly was change. But the structural level revealed the underlying continuities.

In any case, how could a bourgeoisie or middle class develop in a country which remained overwhelmingly rural? To its credit, we see that in the 1920s and 1930s, the plight of the peasants and the need to do something to improve the situation of the countryside had been a top priority

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<sup>194</sup> The corresponding Turkish word is *müktesebat*, and it has become the central feature of debates about EU membership in Turkey since Turkey's status as a candidate for EU membership was officially declared in 1999. In Turkey, anyone, who follows the news even from a distance and who has a rudimentary knowledge of Turkey's accession process to the EU, knows about the EU acquis, which represents the whole body of EU law, regulations, and procedures. The fact that the term 'acquis' does not ring a bell to the 'man on the street' in Europe tells a lot about the bureaucratic machine the EU has become and the disconnect between the 'Eurocrats' and people in Europe.

in Turkey. Yet, fighting against 'reactionary movements' to secularism was always more important in the Kemalists' agenda, and Turkey had to wait until the 1980s for its urban population to pass over the rural population-a milestone that was crossed in the UK in 1851. In 1923, the Turkish economy was predominantly based on agriculture. Dried fruits, tobacco, raw textile materials constituted the country's major export items. The country was still recovering from the effects of a long, uninterrupted war since 1911 onwards. The worldwide economic crisis in 1929 hit Turkey a terrible blow and despite the strong etatist economic policies of the 1930s, the hardships continued. Although Turkey did not enter World War II, it was as terribly devastated economically as those who fought the war. As a result, the economic outlook of Turkey was pretty much unchanged until the 1950s. We must also remember that the loss of the Armenian and Greek populations, who had traditionally performed urban craftsmanship roles, was a huge disruption to the economic life, whose effects were felt well after the 1960s, even into the 1980s.

Kemalism's lack of interest in the economic dimensions of modernisation is worth noting, but what is more remarkable is the fact that the same lack of interest is found in the literature on Kemalism. In other words, the superficial aspects of the Kemalist reforms, which were mostly concerned with Turkey's appearance, attracted so much attention that the underlying issues were generally overlooked. Hence, the above analysis may appear as essentialist or economic to those, who do not know much about Turkey, but who assume a course of scholarly discussion in Turkey roughly paralleling those on European countries. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Those who were best suited to analyse Kemalism from a Marxist perspective in the 1960s and 1970s mostly spent their time and energies on the overarching problem of Turkey's backwardness, the 'feudal' nature of rural communities throughout Anatolia, and the so-called 'Asian mode of production' debates. In this atmosphere, Kemalist reforms were mostly dismissed as a 'petit-bourgeoisie revolution.' Unfortunately, these debates were heavily coloured in the ideological prejudices of the period, and in the aftermath of the 1980 coup, they were made redundant and irrelevant. Those debates were mostly abandoned, their legacy forgotten. Ironically, some of the most vocal figures, who were criticizing Atatürk as being 'the puppet of the European imperialist powers' in the 1960s and the 1970s made a sharp U-turn, and reinvented themselves as staunch Kemalists, without any remorse or self-evaluation.

There is a huge difference between rejecting the essentialist position with the criticism that the base is not the only determinant of the social and political spheres, and suggesting that the base cannot be ignored completely as is the case with most of the literature on Kemalist Turkey. My analysis has tried to take the latter course.

## Liberty vs Justice as the Foundations of a Political Discourse

In the previous section I have looked at how Kemalism fared with respect to class considerations at the base level, which helped us realise that the discourse of Kemalism did not leave much room for such an analysis and tried to steer towards the superstructure level. Another way of conducting a 'deeper' analysis of Kemalism involves looking at the changes in the uses of such key political concepts as sovereignty, legitimacy, justice, or liberty and see the degree to which these concepts were expressed in the framework of the western political discourse (the liberal democratic one at least), with reference to for example, national sovereignty, popular will, rule of law, or civil liberties.

In this section, I will first consider the concepts of 'liberty' and 'justice' and argue that their use in Turkey since Tanzimat has been consistent with the framework of traditional Islamic and Ottoman political discourse<sup>195</sup> and that the western political discourse was mostly paid lip service. I will then argue that the traditional framework still has more relevance than the western one, which will in the end contribute to the main thesis of this chapter that when the surface appearance is scratched and a 'deep look' is given to Kemalism, it will be seen that it was not a radical transformation as it claimed it was.

In the aftermath of the 11 September 2001 attacks, when the US was waging a full frontal 'war on terror' with its self-declared mission to 'bring liberty and democracy to the Greater Middle East,'<sup>196</sup> a common sentiment in the Muslim world was that 'the Americans are claiming that they are trying to bring freedom to the Middle East, but the people here want justice.' On the surface, this sentiment points out to the continuing 'injustices' perceived by the Muslim populations, firstly to the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories, and secondly to the unfair distribution of oil wealth and the huge imbalances in the income distribution. Thirdly, the injustices committed to oppress the Islamist opposition by the nationalist regimes come to mind, which could be expressed in the vocabulary of freedom and liberty, but the vocabulary of justice resonates more in this realm. Hence, the duality between liberty and justice has deeper roots.

At this point, I would like to recall an anecdote related by Bernard Lewis in his article 'Freedom and Justice in Islam.' Accordingly, Sheikh Rifa'at Rafi' al-Tahtawi, an Egyptian scholar travelled to France in the nineteenth century, and later, he wrote a book on his observations in this travel. As Lewis relates, al-Tahtawi 'wrote that when the French talk about freedom they mean what

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<sup>195</sup> This topic has been discussed at length in one of the better books of Bernard Lewis, *The Political Language of Islam*. See Lewis, B. (1991) *The Political Language of Islam*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

<sup>196</sup> In the post 9/11 world, when the Qatar-based Al Jazeera TV channel turned out to be a thorn on the American propaganda machine, the Americans established their own Arabic channel to 'win the hearts and minds of the Arab street.' Not surprisingly, the name of this channel was *Al-Hurra* (Freedom).

Muslims mean when they talk about justice.’ And then Lewis gives his perspective: ‘By equating freedom with justice, he opened a whole new phase in the political and public discourse of the Arab world, and then, more broadly, the Islamic world.’ I do not agree with Bernard Lewis that al-Tahtawi equated freedom with justice. I think his was more of an attempt to understand and express the western concept of freedom in a vocabulary he was familiar with. I will argue below that in Turkey, western political concepts have been rendered meaningful through similar processes of identification with the Islamic and Ottoman discourse, however, that ran counter to the basic premise of Kemalism.

Let us look at the concept of *liberty* more closely. In 1876, in the wake of the declaration of the first constitution, the reformer Midhat Paşa had helped the Ottoman prince Abdülhamid to the throne after Abdülhamid promised that he would sign the constitution and agree to the opening of a parliament. When Abdülhamid used the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-78 as an excuse to freeze the constitution and send the parliament into an indeterminate break, he was widely regarded as having broken his promise. During the long reign of Abdülhamid, many active and informed individuals and factions in the society united in their opposition to the sultan and their strong belief that the reinstitution of the constitution and the reopening of the parliament was the panacea. Abdülhamid’s rule was widely named as *istibdat* (tyranny) which paralleled the European depiction of him as the typical ‘oriental despot.’

In the struggle against Abdülhamid, ‘liberty’ became the chief slogan. Many authors who had lived through that period would later describe living under Abdülhamid as ‘we felt constrained, we felt that we were choking down. There was no room to breathe, no freedom. We longed for the advent of the day when the country would be freed from the chaining constraints of the tyrant.’ On 23 July 1908, Abdülhamid bowed to the Young Turk demands, hence that date would be known as the ‘Declaration of Liberty’ and 23 July was declared an official celebration day as ‘Liberty Festival,’ which was celebrated well into the republic in the 1930s.<sup>197</sup> The monument commemorating this remarkable day was named the ‘Liberty Monument.’ Enver and Niyazi, the two young military officers who refused to obey the sultan’s orders and took to the mountains in Macedonia, were known as ‘the heroes of liberty.’<sup>198</sup> Fittingly, the slogan of the 1908 revolution was, after the French revolution, ‘Liberty, Equality, Brotherhood.’ (Sometimes ‘Justice’ was added to this trio as well.) This slogan was even stamped on the coins in that period.

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<sup>197</sup> In 1919, at the formative stages of national resistance, the opening date of the Congress of Erzurum was made to coincide with the anniversary of the ‘Declaration of Liberty.’

<sup>198</sup> Incidentally, the names of Enver and Niyazi, ‘the heroes of liberty,’ were given to many baby boys born at the height of the constitutional euphoria. For example, Niyazi Berkes, the well-known author of *The Development of Secularism in Turkey*, was born on 21 September 1908 in Cyprus, which had been under British administration since 1878, and he and his twin brother were respectively named Niyazi and Enver by their father, who as a Cypriot Turk had been excitedly following the developments in Ottoman Turkey.

Now, compare these extreme and dizzying heights of liberty-talk with an article titled 'Liberty with Discipline' by Recep Peker, the general secretary of the RPP, in 1933.<sup>199</sup> Peker regarded those who were complaining as 'We are drowning. The pressure in the atmosphere of the country we live in is killing us. We want liberty!' as 'lunatics, if they are not ignorant people or instigators.' For Recep Peker, unrestrained liberty would mean chaos and anarchy, hence a 'discipline' was in order. He then listed all liberty categories, affirmed their existence in Turkey and then gave under which conditions those freedoms could be exercised. On the freedom of travel, he stated that if a person preached about the 'advent of the *Mehdi* (The Guided One), the camel dream, or the fez and tried to deceive innocent people, the government would obviously prevent our free travel and hold him accountable for his actions.'<sup>200</sup>

The concept of liberty in the western political discourse requires on the one hand the individualism of the modern age, and the existence of the concept of civil society on the other. People need to first define themselves as members of a civic community at large, not as members of a family, clan, or an ethnic or religious community. If we are talking liberty, we need to have a definition of the political arena as a non-violent and bloodless battleground on which individuals and civil organisations defend their interests and try to manipulate the public policies accordingly. It seems that such a definition of the political has never been in the Kemalists' minds.

The Egyptian scholar, al-Tahtawi, translated the western concept of freedom accessible to his vocabulary as justice, because his vocabulary, or, to use the title of one of the better books of Bernard Lewis, 'the political language of Islam' contained a ready definition of justice. The Islamic concept of justice was derived from the rights and obligations of commercial contract law, which were extended to apply to family law and personal relations. Justice would prevail if and when everybody was accorded their rights. The violation of any right would then be *zulm*, an unjust exploitation, oppression, or wrong-doing. The person responsible would then be called *zalim*, which is commonly translated to English as 'oppressor,' however, it simply referred to the person who denies someone his rights.

The western political discourse defined an oppressive regime in which freedom was curtailed as a tyranny or dictatorship, after the ancient Greek examples. In the Muslim world, such a regime would be called as *zalim*. When Muslims thought of an oppressive regime, the first examples that sprang to mind were the pharaoh who had enslaved Moses, Nimrod who had thrown Abraham to the fire, the Umayyad caliph Yezid who martyred Muhammad's grandson Husayn after denying

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<sup>199</sup> Recep Peker (1933) "Disiplinli Hürriyet" *Ülkü*, No. 3, pp. 177-180.

<sup>200</sup> Recep Peker's description perfectly fits the irrational, superstitious, ignorant beliefs of the (religiously motivated) 'regressive' (*mürteci*), who as a stereotype had been demonised in the aftermath of the 31 March affair in 1909 against the 'progressive' agenda of the Young Turks. Needless to say, that stereotype had been borrowed from the Orientalist discourse, whose elements I have studied in detail in Chapter One.



him water at Karbala. When the Islamic scholar Bediüzzaman Said Nursi was put on trial after the 31 March affair, he would famously cry out 'Long live hell for the oppressors!' after the injustices he was subjected to.

### *Justice in the 'Near-Eastern tradition'*

One of the major pillars of Ottoman political thought, besides Islam, was what Ottoman historian Halil İnalcık calls as 'the Near-Eastern tradition,' which I will be explaining in more detail below. Justice sat at the centre of this tradition, which was distilled from the experience of the ancient Mesopotamian and Indian civilisations, dating back to several millennia. It was based on the fundamental premise that human nature included evil elements such as greed, cruelty, and injustice, besides the good elements. Hence, a ruler always had to take into account that no matter how hard he tried to establish a just government, there would always be some people in his administration, who would treat his subjects unjustly. Just as the modern western constitutions are documents protecting the liberties of citizens from the tyranny of government, the primary aim of a ruler in the Near-Eastern tradition was to ensure that justice prevailed and the injustices, primarily caused by the public administrators, were prevented. This was an extremely realist approach.

In order to protect their subjects, the rulers in this tradition made justice the cornerstone of their rhetoric. The Ottoman sultans frequently issued *adaletnames*, edicts of justice, in which they warned their administrators in dire terms if they went over their way and used their office for personal gain. The rulers also tried to keep open unconventional and direct ways of access to themselves for all the populace. On certain days, the rulers would open their courts to anyone with a complaint or grievance. Despite the existence of all normal, official channels, it was a fundamental principle that anyone could directly go to the ruler. The rulers were also expected to go out of their palaces in disguise and see with their own eyes how their administrators handled day-to-day affairs. This did not mean that all rulers in the Near East throughout the millennia were just; but the names of those who rose above others in upholding justice, from Cyrus the Great of ancient Persia to the Sassanid ruler Anushirevan and the Umayyad caliph Omar Bin Abdulaziz, were immortalized in fables, remembered for generations, and presented as models to the contemporary rulers to follow. Although these ideas had ancient roots, they were still quite powerful during the Ottoman period and as we shall see, they still are in modern Turkey, despite the efforts of Kemalism to cause a radical transformation of the political discourse.

From the 1960s onwards, with the population on the rise, and urbanisation and industrialisation under way, the university youth, the workers and other social groupings getting restless, the

political agenda in Turkey became much more complex than the authoritarian Kemalist regime of the 1930s and 1940s could ever hope to manage. Kemalism no longer had a hold on the press and the intellectual debates; the Kemalist discourse, now lacking government protection and facing a multitude of opposing voices, could no longer dictate its hegemony. In the hotly contested political atmosphere, the Near Eastern tradition and its concept of justice made a comeback. Not surprisingly, the party who carried on the legacy of the Democrat Party after the 1960 coup was named Justice Party. Its leader, a young and charismatic Süleyman Demirel, who had been the American company Morrison's representative in Turkey, became the champion of a political language that was readily understood by the masses.

In his popular speeches, Demirel showed a remarkable ability to reach out and directly address the issues that mattered to the ordinary people, i.e. the peasants, shopkeepers, small bureaucrats, housewives... Although he frequently used religious themes in his speeches, his revival of the Near Eastern tradition was more significant. As the prime minister, head of the executive branch, Demirel famously stated that 'the responsibility of a sheep that got lost on the banks of River Tigris' rested on his shoulders. This statement was full of symbolism. The choice of Tigris (or Euphrates in some versions), as the imaginary location for the missing sheep, was a reference, first to ancient Mesopotamia, and second to Baghdad as the capital of the Abbasid caliphate. It recalled the legendary 'just rulers' of the Near East. Secondly, the sheep symbolised the people under a government's jurisdiction, after a saying of the Prophet Muhammad 'You are all shepherds and you are responsible for those entrusted to you.' Accordingly, the subjects of the Ottoman sultan were commonly called as *reaya*, the flock.<sup>201</sup> And the responsibility was a personal, or moral responsibility, not a legal or institutional one, but still the imagery was quite powerful because it rested on this long established concept of justice. Another phrase popularised by Demirel was 'the rights of an orphan whose hairs have not yet grown.' In the Islamic tradition, the orphans represented the most vulnerable persons, and special importance was attached to protecting their rights and lawful inheritance. The Koran condemned the oppressors who did not respect the orphan's rights.<sup>202</sup> It is worth noting that Muhammad himself was an orphan. When Demirel used these phrases in his speeches, his words resonated with his audience. He spoke in a language that was familiar to the people. Today, it is customary for and even expected from the public officials to make unannounced visits to the facilities under their responsibility for inspection, and to go in public in disguise to see how their rank treat common people.

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<sup>201</sup> Although the term originally encompassed both Muslim and non-Muslim subjects and denoted the populace at large who were not members of the military class, in time, it came to be mostly identified with the non-Muslim subjects. In European sources, the term was frequently transliterated as *rayah*.

<sup>202</sup> *Koran*, 107:2.

From the Justice Party of Demirel we come to the Justice and Development Party (or AKP, the abbreviated form of its name in Turkish, that is, *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*), which has been governing Turkey since 2002.<sup>203</sup> It could be said that the ‘justice’ part takes us to the traditional concept of justice, while the ‘development’ part takes us to the ‘progress’ of the CUP, both being markers of the pre-Kemalist era. The reference to justice could also be read as an opposition against the guardianship of the military-bureaucratic elite under the guise of Kemalism. The AKP leader, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, served a four month prison term in 1999 after a poem he recited in a public meeting in 1997. This was widely regarded as an attempt to end his political career and contributed to his image as the underdog. Besides, the AKP was borne out of the political tradition of ‘National Outlook,’ whose previous four parties had all been closed down.<sup>204</sup> Hence, there was a widespread feeling in the AKP base that the judiciary branch of the Turkish republic, which was staunchly Kemalist, was being unjust towards them. More than hundred years after the Egyptian scholar al-Tahtawi, a matter of political liberty was still understood in terms of justice.

#### *Oriental Despot or Just Ruler: Justice vs Liberty as Reflected on the Debate on Abdulhamid II*

It could be argued that the concept of justice discussed above was tied to a very personal relationship between a ruler and the ruled, and it would hinder the institutional development of statehood. But such a judgment would mean implicitly recognising the western liberal democratic model as a more advanced and superior model, as the outcome of modernity, and as a model that ‘others’ need to emulate. In response to this criticism, it could then be argued that this concept of justice at least recognised the role ‘passions’ play in politics.<sup>205</sup> In any case, it is definitely not my intent to pass judgment on the liberal democratic model or Kemalism’s modernisation project. I only would like to point out the continuities with the pre-Kemalist past.

Interestingly, one of the best places to see the dichotomy between the outlooks based on justice and liberty is in the debates over Abdülhamid II. Throughout his reign and the second constitutional period afterwards, there was near unanimous agreement in Turkey that he was an

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<sup>203</sup> I would like to note that among the more than 20 political parties entering general elections, only one, the Freedom and Solidarity Party, carries “freedom” in its name, and even then, that is a reformed socialist party with strong ties to environmentalist, feminist and “rainbow” groups. In the 1999 elections it received 0.8% of the popular vote, which fell to 0.34% in 2002. It did not enter 2007 elections but supported independent candidates in certain electoral districts, managing to send only Ufuk Uras, the party leader to the parliament.

<sup>204</sup> The National Order Party was closed after the 1971 military intervention and the National Salvation Party was closed after the 1980 military coup. The Welfare Party and then the Virtue Party was closed by the Constitutional Court with the verdict that they had become ‘the focus of activities against the principle of laicism.’

<sup>205</sup> Mouffe, C. (2005) *On the Political*, London: Routledge, p. 24.

oppressor (*müstebit*) and his regime was one of oppression and tyranny (*istibdat*). Even such well-known Islamists as Mehmed Akif and Bediüzzaman Said Nursi subscribed to this view. However, with the catastrophic defeats in the Balkan Wars, and then World War I, Abdülhamid began to look as much more successful when compared with the performance of the CUP.

In the 1940s, the Islamist poet-writer Necip Fazıl wrote a controversial book on him, titled *Abdülhamid: The Red Sultan or the Great Khan?* Necip Fazıl argued that although Abdülhamid's reign was admittedly oppressive, he was forced to take that course of action in order to protect the crumbling empire. He then claimed that the nickname 'Red Sultan' was given to Abdülhamid by the Jews and the Armenians because he stood between their irredentist plans, but when one considered his service to the Turks, he must have been called as the 'Great Khan.' With regard to his oppressive policies, Necip Fazıl was quick to point out that apart from one or two political executions, Abdülhamid carefully refrained from killing opposition members. He kept the Young Turks under control, but he was like a father figure over them. He tried to win them over by bribes or by appointments, he tried to manipulate factions within the opposition, and if these measures did not work, he sent them to exile, but he never resorted to large scale arrests, public executions, or torture. Today, it must be said that Necip Fazıl's line of reasoning has won the public favour in Turkey, while for Kemalists, Abdülhamid is still an oriental despot. For those, who see Abdülhamid as a 'just ruler,' justice is the foundation of the political discourse, whereas for those, who see him as an oriental despot, liberty is.

### **The Changing Conception of 'Time'**

Before the modernisation era, the Ottomans understood time and located their position in the history of the world according to Islamic principles and the Ottoman political tradition.

From an Islamic perspective, the age in which the Prophet Muhammad lived in was considered as a Golden Age, known as the 'Age of Felicity' (*Asr-i Saadet*), when the Prophet's companions lived in a godly society, unadulterated with the shortcomings of human nature. In the theological sphere, the worth of the generations of Muslims were measured with their closeness to the Prophet's time. The generation of the Prophet's companions (*Sahabe*), who had listened to his preaching and had the opportunity to witness the revelations firsthand, were deemed as the generation with the highest virtue. The next generation, those who were born after the death of the Prophet, but who met with his companions were called 'the Followers' (*Tabiin*) and the generation after them were then called as 'The followers of the followers' (*Tebe-i Tabiin*).

It was understood that as the time went on further and further away from the Prophet's time, people would become more worldly, and it would get progressively harder for people to rise up spiritually. This had been one of the reasons cited for the closing of the gates of reasoning in Islamic Jurisprudence. Even though a scholar could arise at a later period with great knowledge, dedication and capabilities, he would still be encumbered with the fact that he had been born so late in time, so separated in distance from the Age of Felicity, and that he lived in a period in which people succumbed to worldly desires and forgot their faith, that he would be unable to bring a new reasoning into Islamic jurisprudence that was in accordance with the foundations of the faith. We should also remember that Muslims believed that Muhammad was the last prophet, and his coming was the biggest sign that the end of the world was near.

Within the Ottoman context, all this Islamic concept of time was in effect, but in addition, there developed a political discourse with some more sources of inspiration besides Islam. One of those sources was the old Turkish concept of statehood, going back to Central Asia, but for the purposes of this discussion, another source, which could be called as 'the Near Eastern tradition' was more important. This tradition had been transmitted through generations in a series of manuals for the ruler intended to help him conducting politics. Those manuals were known as 'mirror for princes' literature, and dated back to the Sassanid rule in Persia and even as far away as India. *Kelile ve Dimne* was the most popular example of this literature, originally composed in India but reached the Ottomans through Persia. This book and other similar works served as a guideline for Ottoman authors to comment on the current situation of the Ottoman state.

From as early as mid sixteenth century, a series of well known Ottoman authors claimed that the Ottoman system had deviated from its true principles and this deviation was the cause of the problems. This literature would in time come to see the reign of Suleiman I as the Ottoman 'Golden Age.' The most famous example of this literature, a report written by Koci Bey in mid seventeenth century listed all the "recent innovations" that had caused the Ottomans a series of military defeats on both the Austrian and Iranian fronts. The solution was to get rid of those innovations and return to the classical Ottoman system and ideals. (Refer to the fact that the analysis of this literature was behind the Ottoman 'decline' theory from late sixteenth century onwards, and that analysis still forms the backbone of our understanding of that period). On the social and economic spheres, the Ottoman world view believed that it had already reached a perfect state, and it only needed to preserve that state. In that world view, villagers, nomads, artisans, shopkeepers, religious scholars, Janissaries, central administration, in short, everyone had a certain place and function in the society.

This mentality continued well into the late eighteenth century. Hence, although there were some reforms during the Tulip Period, especially in the military sphere, they were mostly technical in

nature, and did not indicate any Ottoman acceptance of European superiority in political, social or economic fields. In this respect, the Ottomans kept their confidence in their system until the beginning of the nineteenth century. We can pinpoint the beginning of the change in Ottoman attitude towards Europe and modernisation to the period from the 1770s to the 1820s, which saw the French Revolution in Europe, Napoleon's Egypt expedition, the rise of Mehmed Ali Paşa in Egypt, and the elimination of the Janissary Corps, but the definitive turn came with the Tanzimat proclamation in 1839. The importance of this change of attitude cannot be stressed enough.

Starting with the proclamation of the Tanzimat, the Ottoman reform movement gave up the traditional concept of time, acknowledged that the Ottoman state had lagged behind European states and that it was weak compared to Europe, and a lot of things had to be done to catch up with Europe. That was a majestic step. With the succeeding generations of Young Ottomans and Young Turks, the concept of time changed so radically that the future was looked upon not as the end of the world, but as being open to progress and development.

Viewed in this respect, Kemalism's claim to distinction fades out. Kemalism claimed that it was necessary to work hard to improve the material conditions in Turkey, however, 'progress' had already entered the political vocabulary in Turkey, as the very name of the Young Turk party, Committee of Union and Progress reflected. In this respect, it is remarkable that 'development' is still viewed as a key concept in contemporary Turkey, as reflected in the name of the Justice and Development Party. Throughout the thesis, I will pursue this line of reasoning (that there are certain continuities to this day) to argue that (i) the things Kemalism tried to completely eradicate and claimed that it did made a comeback, which can be considered a failure on Kemalism's part, (ii) the things that Kemalism claimed that it was the originator had actually had earlier origins and that their existence points to some things larger and deeper than Kemalism.

### **'Catching up with the Level of Modern Civilisation': Kemalism's Obsession with 'Modern'**

On 29 October 1933, Atatürk gave a famous speech during the official celebrations of the tenth anniversary of the republic. Atatürk's declaration that 'The Turkish nation is intelligent! The Turkish nation is hardworking!' is one of the best remembered parts of the speech. He was clearly trying to raise the morale of a beleaguered nation, which for a long time had been called as 'brutes' and accused of being 'lazy.' The sound recording of this speech is one of the very few

occasions through which generations of Turks would hear his voice and this bit, where he forcefully makes these statements, weighing his words carefully to leave a lasting impression, certainly resonates. Yet, the most frequently repeated phrase from that speech is where Atatürk pointed out the ultimate aim of the republic to 'catch up with the level of modern civilisation.' Over the years, it has become a cliché for the statesmen and politicians to repeat this aim at every opportunity and in the process, 'catching up with' must have seemed insufficient to many eyes, and it has unconsciously evolved to 'surpassing.' Either way, this statement warrants a close inspection, because it contains a wealth of insight into the Kemalist mindset.

Let us begin with the actual word Atatürk used that I roughly translated as 'modern' above: *muasır*. The tenth anniversary of the republic happened to be just before the language reform, hence we have an Arabic-origin word, derived from *asr*, meaning epoch or century. *Muasır* then means someone living or something happening in the same period of time and the best English translation would be contemporary, but modern Turkish has only one word for both contemporary and modern. The language reform suggested the Turkish-origin word, *çağdaş* to replace *muasır* and it has largely caught on.

With the dissection of the Turkish words for 'modern' and 'civilisation,' it must have become clear by now that Kemalism has had a serious difficulty in defining what constituted as 'modern' and has by and large equated it with 'contemporary.' This is in line with Kemalism's obsession with the way the West 'appeared' or was made visible. Kemalism wanted the Turks to be modern, but it defined modern primarily through the appearance of contemporary Europe. The European men in 1920's wore hats, hence Kemalism determined that the Turkish men would wear hats. It was also significant that the phrase 'modern civilisation' was singular. This stemmed from the belief that there was only one universal civilisation and it was applicable to all societies. This idea had been strongly defended by Abdullah Cevdet for a long time in his journal *İctihad*. Reference to 'the level' of that civilisation reflected the belief that it was an objective, quantifiable level. Moreover, with the progress of modernity, that level was continuously rising up. In the Kemalist discourse, allowance was made that some nations could be more advanced than others in certain respects. Yet, the belief in an objective, universal civilisation dictated that Turkey had to search for the most advanced country in a certain area and then adopt that country's ways. In practice, this translated to an eclectic approach through which Turkey ended up with the Swiss civil code and the Italian penal code.

I should add at this point that there had been a long running debate on whether the reforms in Turkey had any substance at all or they were just an appearance. The *Times'* correspondent at the Ottoman capital was writing back in 1858 that 'Turkey, like all countries which have taken to imitate those more advanced, is essentially the land of appearances. Having come to the insight

of their own shortcomings, and being yet anxious to muster with other nations, the Turks have learnt to attach far more importance to the showy and superficial than to the more solid and modest.’<sup>206</sup>

The ultimate purpose of Kemalism was then set as taking Turkey up to ‘the level of modern civilisation.’ This was implicit recognition that Turkey was at that time below that level but that was not the whole story. Since modern civilisation was defined with reference to the European example, the level was at the same time an *external* condition. In a sense, it was a moving target—one that kept on changing in its own course. With the transformation of Kemalism as the ideology of the bureaucratic-military elite that legitimated their guardianship over the Turkish society, the level became a convenient tool to preserve the status quo with the pretension that Kemalism was an ‘ongoing revolution.’ The ‘level of modern civilisation’ became the limit of the discursive horizon of Kemalism.

### **Kemalism and the Opposition: The Antagonistic Dimension**

I would like to conclude this chapter by discussing Kemalism’s attitude towards opposition—not a particular oppositional party, but its stance regarding the position of opposition and the role of civil society, or the ‘public space’ in general in the new Turkish Republic. When we look at how the Kemalists, Mustafa Kemal being the most prominent among them, treated the dissenting voices from the earliest days during the liberation war, throughout the key events of the 1920s and the 1930s, it becomes clear that tolerance for opposition did not rank highly in the Kemalist ideology.

Zürcher makes the observation that the CUP<sup>207</sup> period and Kemalist period both went through similar stages in their development and bid for power. The first stage was a pluralistic, democratic stage in which the ruling group allowed opposition. For the CUP, this meant the period from 1908-1913, for the Kemalists, it meant the period from 1919-1925. Then came an ‘authoritarian, repressive phase, which combined an effective one-party system, political, economic and cultural nationalism and modernising and secularizing reforms, 1913-1918 and 1925-50 respectively.’

This had led me to the conclusion in a previous article that ‘The CUP acquired a conspiratorial manner, in part from the Dönmes; this continued to characterize them even after the 1908

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<sup>206</sup> *The Times* (1858) “(From Our Own Correspondent),” 3 March, p. 9.

<sup>207</sup> Here, Zürcher distinguishes between CUP and ‘Young Turk’ as a general description, in which he also includes the Kemalists.



revolution: election rigging, assassinations, and coups d'état became hallmarks of their politics. This was part of the Young Turk political legacy to the regime. Like the Young Turks, the Kemalists saw it as their duty to modernise and westernize Turkey, even if that meant carrying out reforms 'for people, despite people'. In so doing they pushed aside the diverse and pluralistic cosmopolitan culture that had existed in the Ottoman period and, instead, created a narrow monolithic notion of Turkish identity that persists to this day.<sup>208</sup>

I must note that the real issue with Kemalism is not just a case of suppressing opposition, what is more important is the way it approached the idea of opposition to itself. From the outset, Kemalism antagonised any person or group, criticizing its policies or forming an opposition against it by making a number of accusations against them, ranging from negligence to ignorance and even high treason, as described in Atatürk's famous Address to the Youth (*'gaflet ve dalalet ve hatta hıyanet içinde olabilirler'*). Under such circumstances, it has become impossible to publicly criticise Mustafa Kemal or Kemalism in the public arena in Turkey.

All the criticism that Chantal Mouffe directs against the 'consensus politics' of the post Cold War era can be applied to Kemalism in the Turkish case.<sup>209</sup> Kemalism claimed that it alone represented the only viable and acceptable way for Turkey towards reform and modernisation, driving all other alternatives and possibilities out of the legitimate political realm. As Laclau notes, the Kemalist principle of populism 'excludes any notion of antagonism or internal division.'<sup>210</sup> Obviously, Kemalism achieved this internal consistency with a radical denial of the social realities in Turkey. As long as the Kemalist party held on to power, and as long as it was successful in suppressing opposition, this fiction appeared to be working. The issue was not limited to eliminating a few dissenting intellectuals, because Kemalism, in its temerity, did not hesitate to antagonise whole sections of the populace. Hence, far from eradicating the differences and dissension, the antagonistic policies of Kemalism increased them and created an environment in which the problems became ever more entangled and difficult to solve.

## Conclusion

A double discourse runs throughout Kemalism, which points to the existence of a fundamental contradiction in it. Kemalism is a discourse that appears on the surface as a modernising force, but in reality, refuses to come to terms with the fundamental political concepts of modern

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<sup>208</sup> Çarmıklı, E.S. (2008) "The British Foreign Office and the *Dönme* Conspiracy," *The CSD Bulletin*, p. 15.

<sup>209</sup> Mouffe, C. (2005) *On the Political*, London: Routledge, pp. 29-34, 78-81.

<sup>210</sup> Laclau, E. (2005) *On Populist Reason*, p. 209.

democracies, such as the sanctity of free will, the right of dissent, civil society, rule of law, opposition, etc. Clearly, such a discourse cannot form the basis for the establishment of a modern political community.

Kemalism was influenced by the perceptions of the West, or the Orientalists in wanting to mimic the level of civilisation of Europe and it took an Orientalist stance in respect to how it would transform its society. In this 'model' Islam was seen as 'inferior' or more specifically it was seen as a force of tradition that promoted the domination of religion and sacred law and therefore a barrier towards progress. In this sense, if progress was to be achieved it had to be eradicated or at least removed, so as not to contaminate the workings of the state. Parallel to this was the idea that the 'people' were 'backward' and not 'ready for civilisation' and that they had to be guided by an elite. This led Kemalism to impose a view of the people from a centre of power, which regarded them as a homogeneous entity or a seamless community, resulting in the collapse of any fruitful interaction between the state and the people. In this condition, Kemalism enforced its reforms on the people but this always involved a double-discourse. People were denied a chance to express their 'demands' in the political sphere.

## Chapter Three

### Secularism at the Centre of the Kemalist Discourse

‘The future is unknown. Nobody knows which party it will favour, or whether it will produce something completely unforeseen. As to the present, all we can see is helplessness or impulsive reactions dictated by Western policy and the supremacy of technology over the destiny of human societies. There is no current articulation of ideas that offers us the possibility of changing ourselves so that we may have a historic and not merely geographic existence. This is the task facing intellectuals in our countries, above all those in our universities, both religious or lay, teachers and students alike.’

Moustapha Safouan<sup>211</sup>

#### Introduction

In Chapter One, I argued that Europe’s influence on Kemalism, in fact on all modernising currents including Islamism,<sup>212</sup> was hegemonic. I have considered the general European attitude towards the Ottoman Empire/Turkey and the Turks in the nineteenth century, and called it Orientalism. I then identified all those who agreed with both the diagnoses and the proposed solutions of the Orientalists on the problems of the people and the countries in the East as Kemalists, and I labelled Kemalism as an ‘Orientalism from within.’ In the next chapter, I have tried to situate Kemalism within the Turkish modernisation project. Kemalism was a discourse, which regarded the European civilisation as universal and called for the adoption of western European values, culture, life style, and political system, in its entirety. I argued that this discourse began to emerge from late nineteenth century onwards in the Young Turk movement.

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<sup>211</sup> Safouan, M. (2007) *Why Are the Arabs Not Free? - The Politics of Writing*, London: Blackwell Publishing, p. 32.

<sup>212</sup> Here, I am not using Islamism as an aspect of Islam as a religion, or a tradition, but as a movement or ideological current that had arisen in the Islamic world towards the end of the nineteenth century. For Islamism, the answer to the question ‘Why did the Islamic world lag behind in progress and development?’ was not ‘Because Islam was a barrier to progress’ but ‘Because Muslims deviated from true Islam.’ Hence, for the Islamists, the solution was to go back to the ‘roots’ of Islam, and to cleanse the faith of ‘evil innovations’ and ‘superstitions.’ In this sense, the Islamists were revivalists. They were also called as *Selefi* (or in Arabic orthography, *Salafi*), from the Arabic word *salaf*, meaning ‘predecessor.’ Two important points to note here are that the Islamists were largely modernists in character, and that not all Muslims were Islamists. For a general overview of the history of Islamism in Turkey, see Kara, İ. (1997) *Türkiye’de İslamcılık Düşüncesi: Metinler, Kişiler*, İstanbul: Kitabevi Yay.

Kemalism was not just a discourse, it was the most ambitious transformation attempt, in other words the most comprehensive 'social engineering' project one could ever imagine, with the express aim of fully converting Turkey so that it looked like a European country in all respects, from the way its people dressed to the script they used, the music they listened to and the political system in which they were governed.

It was inevitable that such a project would fail to accomplish its goals, and in order to assess the degree of change Kemalism tried to initiate, I then considered the evolution of such political concepts as liberty, justice, and opposition in Chapter Two. I concluded that although Kemalists claimed to have created a modern state based on the European model, their understanding of citizenship, civil society, and opposition were patriarchal and did not extend far to include the democratic demands of the people. Hence, the changes Kemalism achieved were limited to the 'appearance,' while on the conceptual level the continuities were much more prevalent. Nevertheless, those changes resulted in an 'identity crisis' or 'trauma' in the Turkish society, whose effects are still being felt today.

I also argued so far that throughout the modernisation period in the Ottoman Empire, a variety of discursive elements were allowed to come into play. It was a period when arts, literature, and political debate flourished. The coming of Kemalism allowed for the closure of certain discourses and the creation of a discourse around the point de caption or nodal point of 'modernisation' that manifested itself as westernisation. This led to the minimisation of Turkish intellectual life.

In this chapter, I focus my attention on the central role secularism played in the Kemalist ideology and reforms. I shall begin by a theoretical treatment of secularisation and secularism in the western political tradition. Afterwards, I will briefly look at the secularisation process during the Ottoman period, and then I will engage in a general discussion of secularism as one of the six principles of the Kemalist ideology. The bulk of the chapter, however, shall be devoted to a detailed and careful analysis of some key texts to investigate how the secularist discourse came to dominate the early republican Turkey. These textual analyses will help me deconstruct the secularist discourse of Kemalism.

Within the secularist discourse, the 'enemy' was bigotry and ignorance of centuries that had come to displace the original, unadulterated Islam, but this did not change the end result that every advance of the secularist discourse was accompanied by another round of forced cleansing of the public sphere from the religious and traditional elements. But the relationship between secularism in advance and Islam in retreat was more than that of cause and effect. Here, Islam represents not just the religion but the whole Ottoman Turkish tradition, culture and way of life, or simply, everything that the Kemalists thought that that was wrong with Turkey, everything that

had caused Turkey to stay behind in the 'relentless race towards progress and enlightenment among the nations of the world.'

Another dimension of the question is that the whole political and social vocabulary of the Ottoman Turkish society was built with reference to Islam. This made the task of establishing the secularist discourse doubly difficult, because even the secularist discourse itself had to be explained within the discursive horizon of Islam, that is, the very thing it was trying to replace. Therefore, Islam was a problem that had to be dealt with. How did secularism deal with the problem of Islam? How did it manage to control religion? These are the main questions that I will address in this chapter. The answers will shed light on how Kemalist secularism defined political parameters and delineated the limits of permissible activities within the political sphere.

### **Secularisation and Secularism in the West**

John Keane has recently argued that the age old tale of religions conquering the temporal world has, in the modern era, reappeared in the doctrine of the secularisation of the world where the secular conquers all superstitious and backward belief<sup>213</sup>. Intellectual defenders of secularism think of themselves as modernists and above all democrats. They advocate and celebrate its now supposed long-term victory over religion. Of course, there are many different secularist perspectives<sup>214</sup> but for most secularism goes hand in hand with democracy. Regarding Kemalism, however, this relationship was neither apparent theoretically or practically.

The ideal of secularism, that has at its core the institutional and legal separation of religion and state, is understood by secularists as a progressive step in political (i.e. more democratic) moral and rational terms. Freedom from public religious obligations enhances political citizenship, allowing greater freedom of choice and the rational thinking through of political and social questions, rather than bowing to dogma or tradition. Democratically speaking this mindset allows for a more tolerant and inclusive political culture that usually goes hand in hand with other liberal freedoms (of expression, property, association and so on). It ought to be noted that the theoretical and actual ties of the 'secularism-democracy-liberalism' relationship as the standard bearer of modern progressive politics which has established itself in the post-war era, was absent when the Kemalists came to high office.

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<sup>213</sup> Keane, J. (2000) "Secularism?" *Religion and Democracy*, D. Marquand and R.L. Netter (eds.), Oxford: Blackwell, Political Quarterly Special Issues, pp. 5–19.

<sup>214</sup> See for examples, Taylor, C. (1998) "Modes of Secularism," in Rajeev Bhargava (ed.), *Secularism and its Critics*, Calcutta: Oxford University Press, pp. 31-53; cited in Keane, J. (2000) "Secularism?," p. 5.

Away from practical experience, theoretically speaking, contemporary political theorists favour secularism or at least point to the political advantages of the secular and religion existing side by side. Such is the argument of the ‘communitarian’ philosopher Charles Taylor,<sup>215</sup> who has argued for the ‘complementarity’ of religion, secular society and political democracy. He does this through a historical account which included an exploration of the etymology of the word *saeculum* (secularisation), and a self acknowledged ‘potted-history’ of how the ‘Latin Christian West’ moved from societies where religious belief was almost total to ones where the triumph of modern secularism was ‘coterminous with the rise of a society in which for the first time in history a purely self-sufficient humanism came to be a widely available option.’<sup>216</sup>

Further elaboration on the etymology of the term *saeculum* will help us link secularism with modernity, as they are both linked to an understanding of time as a *changing* or *evolving* entity. Charles Taylor points out that the word *saeculum* was used in Latin texts to mean ‘of or belonging to an age or long period.’<sup>217</sup> ‘In Christian usage, Taylor points out, *saeculum* connoted “the temporal” and, hence, the world as opposed to the church.’<sup>218</sup> As Fred Dallmayr notes, *saeculum* means ‘century or world-age (*aion*) or, still more broadly, temporality. Seen from this angle, attention to the “secular” implies a concern with the temporal dimension of human and social life, with the character of human experience in given age, including experience of the sacred or divine.’<sup>219</sup> Keane describes the transformation of the term ‘secular’ from its technical, church-based origins as a process of ‘modernisation.’ According to Keane, ‘the word “secular” as flung into motion and used to describe a world thought to be in motion.’<sup>220</sup>

At this point, it is worth remembering that the word ‘modernity’ was also derived from the Latin root *modus*, for which an understanding of changing time was at its essence, as can be seen in the other words derived from the same root, *moda*, for fashion, or the musical term, *mode*. Hence, what we have in the concepts of ‘secular’ and ‘modern’ is an understanding that society and its norms has become fast changing and that the traditional/medieval/religious world-view is no longer adequate.

Taking into account the prevailing attitude towards religion or tradition in the Enlightenment thought in terms of this thesis what is important here is that theoretically speaking at least, there is a challenge to the way secularism has been deployed as a form of rationalism, and a potential

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<sup>215</sup> Keane, J. (2000) “Secularism?” pp. 8-9.

<sup>216</sup> Taylor, C. (2007) *A Secular Age*, Boston, MA: Harvard University Press, p. 18.

<sup>217</sup> Taylor, C. (1995) *Philosophical Arguments*, Cambridge, MA & London: Harvard University Press, chapter 13; cited in Keane, J. (2000) “Secularism?” p. 8.

<sup>218</sup> Keane, J. (2000) “Secularism?” p. 9.

<sup>219</sup> Dallmayr, F. (1999) “Rethinking Secularism (With Raimon Panikkar),” *The Review of Politics*, Vol. 61, No. 4, p. 720.

<sup>220</sup> Keane, J. (2000) “Secularism?” p. 6.

anti-democratic strain within it that has been identified. In Keane's words, 'Perhaps the most strikingly contradictory, self-paralysing feature of secularism is its theoretical and practical affinity with political despotism.'<sup>221</sup> Despite the contemporary emphasis on the 'secularism-democracy' relationship and that secularity is a central organising principle of modern societies, it has a darker potentiality. The Kemalists, as early twentieth century modernisers, could have barely contemplated themselves as such without secularism being a key component of their political project, but it is one that in their case not only predated the 'secularism-democracy' relation, but existed without large political elements of either 'democracy' or 'liberalism'. In this thesis, I argue that of the six principles of Kemalism, it is not populism, as claimed by Betül Çelik, following Levent Köker, but secularism that holds the key to understanding the Kemalist ideology.<sup>222</sup> I also argue that through the Kemalist reforms, Islam was turned into a social problem that was constricted to the private sphere. It is worth noting that the seminal book of Niyazi Berkes titled *The Development of Secularism in Turkey* had been translated to Turkish with the title *Türkiye'de Çağdaşlaşma (Modernisation in Turkey)*, which shows the importance of secularism in the Turkish modernisation.

What then is meant by secularism, in general and in the specifics of the Kemalist Turkish case? Notions of 'secularisation' are, of course diverse and authors use the concept in different ways. Generally speaking secularisation refers to a process of differentiation where the various aspects of society (economic, political, legal, and even moral) become increasingly discrete in relation to each other. When discussing individual institutions, secularisation refers to the transformation of religious into secular institutions. All in all secularisation is generally understood as a process – in classical sociology a great deal of literature was given over to the examination of the gradual secularisation of traditional society.<sup>223</sup> This concept is also sometimes used synonymously with *secularism*, a political doctrine that aims to individualise and privatise religious faith, eliminating all religious symbols, authorities and organisations from public life. Such a political project can be

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<sup>221</sup> *Ibid*, p. 14.

<sup>222</sup> Çelik, N.B. (1996) "Kemalist Hegemony from Its Constitution to Its Dissolution," Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Essex, pp. 123-177; Köker, L. (1990) *Modernleşme, Kemalizm ve Demokrasi*, İstanbul: İletişim Yay., pp. 133-210. Chapter Three of Çelik's PhD thesis, where she discusses the six principles of Kemalism is based to a large degree on Levent Köker's book. Çelik's main argument in Chapter Three of her thesis is that 'populism is almost the only Kemalist principle that can provide a better understanding of the internal logic of the Kemalist discourse,' while Köker argues that 'populism has become the most meaningful principle at the basis of the republic and the Kemalist reforms. ... it is a suitable path to take populism as the basis in order to answer what kind of an ideology Kemalism was, and especially to understand how the Kemalist principles were related to each other.

<sup>223</sup> Durkheim, Weber, Marx, the founding 'fathers' of modern sociology all had as a central concern the process of social change from traditional to modern societies, see, Craib, I. (1997) *Classical Social Theory: An Introduction to the thought of Marx, Weber, Durkheim and Simmel*, Oxford: OUP. Fred Dallmayr's brief overview on this subject is useful: Dallmayr, F. (1999) "Rethinking Secularism (With Raimon Panikkar)," pp. 717-718.

said to have been pursued in Turkey under Atatürk, and it continues to have the status of a predominant set of ideas in Turkey.

Like most social and political concepts there is ambiguity here as secularisation is also used to denote the diminishing role of religion in political culture, attitudes and beliefs. This process is not necessarily connected to secularisation as a political doctrine and in Turkey there is a tension between state and society in this respect.

In one sense then secularisation has simply and generally been understood as the separation of church and state. From the beginning of the modern system of liberal states that spread across Europe from the mid-nineteenth century this is certainly the case. However there is another understanding of secularism that also has an historical and theoretical tradition of its own. This, according to Berkes, developed from the Catholic states of Europe (rather than the protestant countries, which tended towards the former meaning).<sup>224</sup> Here the notion is tied to 'laicism' that more specifically can be defined as the removal of institutions from the state and the development of a Republicanism that situates citizenship next to the secularisation process. While these two concepts of secularism are useful here they are, of course, tied to this notion in relation to Christian states, when it comes to a non-Christian, Muslim dominated country like Turkey the issues become further complicated. In the Turkish case the antagonism is not so much between the spiritual world and the material one, but between the tendencies of a 'traditional' way of life and the forces of change, promoted by the Kemalists and other modernisers in the post-Ottoman state.

The concept of secularism understood as a process of change also goes along with the idea of a flexible and differentiated state where different behaviour and customs from differentiated social cleavages is tolerated, generally along the liberal model. In the mainstream literature on secularisation one of its constituent features is then a setting of various social values co-existing. This contrasts with the unchanging and stagnate values of a traditional society. In the latter change either through the agency of the state, collectivities or individuals is considered to be potentially disruptive to the social order. The secular society is said to embrace dynamism, iconoclasm and independence. This is itself tied to notions of progress and modernisation, whether materially or morally real or imagined. Again in the Turkish case this presents an interesting divergence from the commonly accepted categorical types of 'traditional' and 'secular' societies. The one-party state of the Kemalists embraced secularism without necessarily the tradition of liberalism that had characteristically marked it in the West. This is not to suggest that western liberalism and secularism were superior or without problems. But it is worth noting that

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<sup>224</sup> Berkes, N. (1964) *The Development of Secularism in Turkey*, London: Hurst & Co., pp. 5-8.



the particular tensions that we can discern in the Turkish case are different to those considered in the literature on secularisation that has tended to deal with western Christian states.

Given what has been said above, then, in this thesis the concept of secularisation is not simply taken as the development of a neutral, non-religious state, where church and political institutions are separated. Rather drawing upon the slightly broader definition of the tradition of 'laicism' secularisation and secularism are here associated with a broader ideological and dominant position of the state. This broader use of the term is necessitated by the particular case under investigation. In Turkey there was no concept of church and state being separate as the two were intimately bound together in the discourse of political and social life in the Ottoman period. This stems from the Islamic idea of the state being the embodiment of religious authority. The consequence of this is that when we look at secularisation in an Islamic state, the institutions, discursive practices and points of antagonism will have different settings to those of a Western Christian state.

#### *Secularism and the Rise of Religious Movements in the World since 1960s*

If the 'triumph of secularism' characterised the modern era, symbolised in Nietzsche's declaration of the 'death of God,' the worldwide resurgence of religious groups from the 1960s onwards was quite unexpected and led to a flurry of activity in the academic circles in the effort to explain this paradoxical development, leading Gilles Kepel to declare the 'revenge of God.'<sup>225</sup> When looked at under this light, the late nineteenth and early twentieth century belief that science and reason would completely replace religion in modern societies, a belief the Kemalists subscribed so faithfully, appears premature. Religion, after all, might not have been so disconnected from life. As Gandhi put it so eloquently, 'those who say religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion is.'<sup>226</sup> Regarding Islamic societies, this seemed to have an even greater relevance. 'A major theme for modernisation theorists ... is that ... in Islam, religion is politics and politics is religion.'<sup>227</sup>

While it may be argued that Islam never lost its centrality in Turkey even during the heyday of Kemalist reforms, the rise of Islam from 1950s or 1960s onwards may well be considered to be in harmony with the rather unexpected rise of religious movements and religious sensibilities throughout the world since 1960s. As Chantal Mouffe observes in an article titled 'Religion,

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<sup>225</sup> Dallmayr, F. (1999) "Rethinking Secularism (With Raimon Panikkar)," p. 715.

<sup>226</sup> Gandhi, M. (1940) *Autobiography or the Story of My Experiments in Truth*, first published in 1927, Ahmedabad: N.P., p. 371.

<sup>227</sup> Vikor, K. (2004) "Sufism and Foreign Rule in Africe: Politics and Piety", in *Muslim Societies: Historical and Comparative Aspects*, Sato Tsugitaka (ed.), London: RoutledgeCurzon, p. 9.

Liberal Democracy, and Citizenship,' 'contrary to what many liberals had predicted, instead of becoming obsolete thanks to the development of "postconventional identities" and the increasing role of rationality in human behaviour, religious forms of identification currently play a growing role in many societies. ... It seems, therefore, that the old controversy about the relationship between religion and politics, far from being on the wane, is again on the agenda.'<sup>228</sup> It is one of the starting points of this chapter, and indeed this thesis, that groups, communities and movements based religious identities are among the 'new social movements' of the contemporary world, and their existence cannot simply explained away as an anomaly.

Furthermore, it is telling from the perspective of the main argument of this thesis that for Kemalists, secularism is mutually incompatible with the existence of the religious identities (not just Islam as a general signifier, but the multitude of Islamic communities such as Sufi orders, Islamist political groups, etc). For Kemalists, the advancement of secularism requires the annihilation of these identities. The religious identities have high visibility in Turkey, and hence, they receive the largest share of the Kemalist attacks, however, this only points out to a general intolerance of Kemalism towards *any* social movement that falls outside its prescribed scheme of a westernized, well-ordered Turkish society, without any allowance for the existence of the political or the social.

### **Which Secularism? Different Contexts and Definitions of Secularism**

The literature on secularism is vast and is spread across a multitude of academic disciplines. Secularism and secularisation has been the subject of extensive study and debate in fields as far ranging as sociology, anthropology, constitutional law, legal theory, politics, philosophy, and political theory. Secularism pops up in many different contexts and discussions, whether the topic under consideration is Enlightenment philosophy, the relationship between modernity and the particularity of the Western experience of it, the current debates on multiculturalism and pluralism, the politics of religious minorities, religious education, the use of religious symbols in public schools, Islamic fundamentalism, or the so-called 'clash of civilisations.'

If the terms 'secular', 'secularism', and 'secularisation' were being used in a consistent manner across the width and breadth of these discussions, it would not be much of a problem, but as one author warns her readers, their meanings 'are constantly shifting in the literature, depending on

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<sup>228</sup> Mouffe, C. (2006) "Religion, Liberal Democracy, and Citizenship," in *Political Theologies: Public Religions in a Post-Secular World*, H. De Vries and L.E. Sullivan (eds.), New York: Fordham University Press, p. 318.

whether a given author believes that they are real.’<sup>229</sup> Another author notes that ‘secularism is not only, obviously, a very complex, polysemic and – as all our basic concepts – an essentially contested concept but also a ‘fuzzy’, chameleonic, highly misleading or ‘cacophonous’ concept.’<sup>230</sup> To further complicate the matters, the Turkish terms *laiklik* (laicism) and *sekülerizm* (secularism) are sometimes used interchangeably, and some other times attributed distinct meanings, but even then, there is no consistency in the distinction being made –what one author refers to as a distinguishing feature of laicism over secularism might be attributed to secularism by another author.

The confusion in the literature on secularism has led Veit Bader, who has spent a lot of effort in cataloguing the different senses of secularism and different implementations of it throughout the world, to ask the question: ‘Is ‘secularism’ a vacuous word or a phantom concept?’<sup>231</sup> The rise of religious movements since 1960, as discussed above in a sub-section, and the ‘resurgence of so-called political religion in the 1980s’ led one sociologist to ask a daring question: ‘Who still believes in the *myth* of secularization?’<sup>232</sup> This may lead us to ask if the term ‘secularism’ can be treated as a ‘floating signifier’ in the language of discourse theory as per Laclau and Mouffe, in the sense that its ‘meaning’ can be fixed so as to suit one’s own interests.<sup>233</sup>

Things only get more complicated once we move from the debate as it takes place within the strict boundaries of the West and try to apply secularism and concepts related to it in non-western contexts. It has to be noted that ‘secularism’ and ‘nationalism’ are what Chatterjee calls ‘modular’ imports from the West. Accordingly, these ‘modular’ imports are not based on an identity but rather on a difference with the ‘modular.’ Once exported to the non-West, ‘secularism’ has to either ‘adapt’ or ‘not adapt’ to a culture or society that is not Western.<sup>234</sup> In addition, a number of scholars argue (mainly with reference to the Indian case) that the ‘European Enlightenment and its emphasis on secularism was not simply ‘a humane and liberating movement; it also contained oppressive potentials, in particular, the tendency to portray religious thinking as false with respect to science and the accompanying stereotyping of religious people as backward.’ They conclude that western models of ‘secularism’ was a ‘gift of

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<sup>229</sup> Cannell, F. (2010) “The Anthropology of Secularism,” *The Annual Review of Anthropology*, vol. 39, p. 86.

<sup>230</sup> Bader, Veit (2010) “Constitutionalizing secularism, alternative secularisms or liberal-democratic constitutionalism? A critical reading of some Turkish, ECtHR and Indian Supreme Court cases on ‘secularism’,” *Utrecht Law Review*, vol. 6, no. 3, p. 9.

<sup>231</sup> *Ibid*, p. 17.

<sup>232</sup> Casanova, J. (1994) *Public Religions in the Modern World*, Chicago: Chicago University Press, p. 11; Qutoed in Cannell, F. (2010) “The Anthropology of Secularism,” p. 87.

<sup>233</sup> Laclau, E. and C. Mouffe (1985) *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Toawrds a Radical Democratic Politics*, London and New York: Verso, pp. 134-136.

<sup>234</sup> Chatterjee, P. (1993) *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, pp. 5-6.

Christianity,' that is 'specific to and only feasible within a particular European, post Protestant context.'<sup>235</sup>

In this milieu where secularism is used to refer to different concepts, sometimes in wildly contradictory manners, Veit Bader's work on secularism offers invaluable guidance. In a series of articles and books, Bader has painstakingly summarised and outlined the viewpoints of the important participants in the current secularism debates, while he has also catalogued different practices of secularism throughout the world.<sup>236</sup> Yet Bader is not simply a neutral encyclopaedist of the secularism debate. For Bader, liberal-democratic principles are sufficient to secure the ends the secularists are trying to secure. Secularism is admittedly a highly charged concept, and it evokes strong reactions from both its proponents and opponents. Hence bringing secularism into any political debate only serves to antagonise the issue at hand. Bader sums up his main argument in his own words as follows: 'I have proposed to replace all normative concepts of "secularism" by "priority for liberal-democracy" because I am convinced that we are better able to economize our moral disagreements or to resolve the substantive constitutional, legal, jurisprudential and institutional issues and controversies by avoiding to restate them in terms of "secularism" or "alternative secularisms".'<sup>237</sup>

Furthermore, there is one article in Bader's work, titled "Constitutionalizing secularism, alternative secularisms or liberal-democratic constitutionalism?" that is directly related to this thesis. In this article, Bader discusses secularism with direct and specific reference to the Turkish and Indian cases in a comparative way. He identifies no less than 12 different ways secularism can be understood in and applied to the legal and political issues, and investigates how the Turkish Kemalist secularism and the Indian nationalist secularism fares in each case. As will be seen, there are many parallels in Bader's concise observations and the detailed arguments I make throughout the thesis. Hence, I shall be referring to Bader's categorisations whenever the opportunity presents itself. At the end of the chapter, I shall pay special attention to what Bader calls as 'secularism as a "meta-narrative"' and will argue that Kemalist secularism has become a worldview or a way of life, something more than a political ideology.

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<sup>235</sup> Madan, T. N. (1997) *Modern Myths, Locked Minds: Secularism and Fundamentalism in India*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, p. 754; Cited in Cannell, F. (2010) "The Anthropology of Secularism," pp. 93-94.

<sup>236</sup> Bader, V. (1999) "Religious Pluralism: Secularism or Priority for Democracy?" *Political Theory*, no. 5, pp. 597-633; Bader, V. (2007) *Secularism or Democracy? Associational Governance of Religious Diversity*, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press; Bader, V. (2009) "Secularism, public reason or moderately agonistic democracy?" in G.B. Levey and T. Modood (eds.), *Secularism, Religion and Multicultural Citizenship*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 110-135; Bader, V. (2010) "Constitutionalizing secularism, alternative secularisms or liberal-democratic constitutionalism? A critical reading of some Turkish, ECtHR and Indian Supreme Court cases on 'secularism'," *Utrecht Law Review*, vol. 6, no. 3, pp. 8-35.

<sup>237</sup> Bader, V. (2010) "Constitutionalizing secularism, alternative secularisms or liberal-democratic constitutionalism?" p. 8.

## Secularisation in Turkey as a Process since Ottoman Times

Before going to discuss secularism and Kemalism, a word should be said on the secularisation of politics during the Ottoman Empire. The origins of reform in the Ottoman Empire can be traced back to the sixteenth century when the Empire was supposedly at its zenith in terms of military power. Notwithstanding, until the eighteenth century the Ottomans still regarded themselves as on par, if not, superior to the European states. Hence at this point in Ottoman history reformists proposed changes from within the Empire and did not advocate importing ideas or practices from Europe. In the eighteenth century, however, the Ottomans started to bring in European modes of life and, especially their military know-how. This change in Ottoman thinking vis-à-vis European superiority had occurred largely due to the rather traumatic defeats they endured in the hands of Austrians and later Russians in the eighteenth century. Nevertheless, mention of different notions of liberty, parliament or legal codes which were particulars of European political thought and institutions was not made yet.<sup>238</sup>

The transformation which started as military reforms ended up as a wholesale change of Ottoman political, social, and cultural life.<sup>239</sup> Ottoman sultans in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries emulated Europe in their centralisation attempts.<sup>240</sup> Especially Mahmud II did away with the provincial notables who had collaborated with the anti-reformists in the Empire. He also established a European type bureaucracy. In order to fill the bureaucratic ranks he opened up European type schools and sent students abroad. This new bureaucratic elite would not only serve the state but also be the staunch supporters and perpetrators of modernisation in the Empire.

One of the first tasks of the new modernist elite as they gained ground and support was to attempt to destroy the power of the religious scholars, who as interpreters of the law, that was shari'a, constituted a check on the power of the executive, namely the sultan and his bureaucratic cadres. Moreover, the common law of the shari'a was substituted with written legal codes. Once the law was codified, anyone who had technical training could look it up and interpret it. Thus appeared a bureaucratic cadre which did not have an independent position that the religious scholars previously enjoyed but was strictly dependent on the executive emerged. In 1876 a constitution was promulgated and a legislature was formed, but these were not complete as to constitute some sort of a check on the executive like the *ulema* did, and once the Sultan

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<sup>238</sup> Ortaylı, İ. (2001) "Osmanlı'da 18. Yüzyıl Düşünce Dünyasına Dair Notlar," in *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce*, Vol. 1, *Cumhuriyet'e Devreden Düşünce Mirası: Tanzimat ve Meşrutiyetin Birikimi*, İstanbul: İletişim Yay., pp. 38-41.

<sup>239</sup> Koçak, C. (2001) "Osmanlı/Türk Siyasi Geleneğinde Modern Bir Toplum Yaratma Projesi Olarak Anayasanın Keşfi, Yeni Osmanlılar ve Birinci Meşrutiyet" in *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce*, Vol. 1, pp. 72-87.

<sup>240</sup> Ortaylı, İ. (2001) "Osmanlı'da 18. Yüzyıl Düşünce Dünyasına Dair Notlar," pp. 39-40.

abolished them in 1878, there was nothing on his way to absolute rule. This political secularisation, that is subordination of law to the executive, set a precedent for all future absolutist rules that modern Turkey has witnessed up until now.<sup>241</sup>

At this point, I would like to make a distinction between 'secularity' and 'secularism.' I understand secularity as the state of living or being in a 'secular' state, which is not controlled by religion.<sup>242</sup> In the words of Veit Bader, the 'secularity of the state' is 'the relational autonomy of state from (organized) religions.'<sup>243</sup> Elsewhere, Bader makes a distinction between 'secularity' and 'secularism': 'The idea of a secular state – one might then better say: of the 'secularity' of the state, distinguished from secularism ...– is a (minimalist) moral ideal, not ... a strategic bare modus vivendi. It has been historically violated more often than not by "secular modernizing states."'<sup>244</sup> Therefore, 'secularism' refers to an activist political ideology while secularity contains in itself an observation about the qualities of the state. Secularity can be considered a close relative of the sociological concept of modernity.<sup>245</sup>

### **Secularism as one of the Principles of Kemalism, or the 'Six Arrows'**

Secularism is one of the six principles of Kemalism. The secular character of the Kemalist regime is enshrined in the second article of the constitution, which cannot be amended. Despite its central importance in the Turkish politics, secularism is still a fiercely debated topic in practical political life. As stated above part of the difficulty arises from the fact that the development of secularism happened in Europe over many centuries and through many struggles, a historical experience that Turkey had not undergone. Another issue is that it is also illegal under the fourth article of the constitution to argue against secularism. Political parties can, and have been, closed down if they declare their opposition to secularism. Even wearing a headscarf can be considered as declaration of opposition to secularism.

The Kemalist understanding of secularism is not only a separation between state and religion, but also a subordination of religion that defines Islam as, ultimately, an affair of the state. In this

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<sup>241</sup> Feldman, N. (2008) *The Fall and Rise of the Islamic State*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, pp. 7-8.

<sup>242</sup> Here I use the term 'state' consciously in two meanings, first state as the highest political organisation in a sovereign territory, and secondly state as describing the general situation in a given political setting (as in the phrase 'state of the nation').

<sup>243</sup> Bader, Veit (2010) "Constitutionalizing secularism, alternative secularisms or liberal-democratic constitutionalism?" p. 14.

<sup>244</sup> Bader, V. (2007) *Secularism or Democracy?*, p. 97.

<sup>245</sup> Cannell, F. (2010) "The Anthropology of Secularism," p. 87, 89, 96.

sense religion is secondary to the aims of the state that seeks to orientate social life around the rationalist principles of 'public administration' using science and technology as its guiding tools.

The notion of secularism is a 'nodal point' around which it may collate. Mustafa Kemal attempted to create an 'imaginary', a set of national myths, rituals and symbols to replace those of Islam, with the aim of lessening the need for religion, to undermine its importance in public life. This extreme interpretation of secularism was a part of the fundamental basis of change both for the nation as a whole. God was to be replaced by the 'Nation', symbolised by the iconic status of Atatürk, as the source of sovereignty and as the object of worship. In order to limit the importance of, and increase the state's control over Islam, Atatürk abolished the Caliphate and replaced the Sultan with the National Grand Assembly that passed decrees under his guidance. Affairs related to Islam were submitted to the *Diyanet* institution (frequently mistranslated as the Directorate of Religious Affairs, as shall be discussed below) that was attached to the prime minister directly. This made it possible to control the religious affairs of the nation. In addition, Islamic Law was replaced by secular legislation, Islamic educational institutions were closed down and emphasis was put on the pre-Islamic history of Turkey. Religious costumes were only allowed at funerals or public religious arrangements, and all Sufi convents (*tekkes* and *zaviyes*) were closed down.

The social engineering undertaken by Atatürk's government was instigated on the basis of constituted Turkish characteristics in order to attempt the closure of a national sense of identity and unity. This approach excluded and denied the existence of a multi-various Turkish cultural identity and attempted a closure of the social. The state attempted to impose its own sense of the norms of modernity, in particular attempting to negate the Islamic-Ottoman discourse and its historical construction of meanings. The project of establishing a national Turkish unity was imposed from above, a state being made into a nation,<sup>246</sup> but this created a tension between society and state.

There is then something peculiar and differentiated about the relationship between secularisation and the Turkish republican regime. One might argue that the relationship is paradoxical. This has its basis historically, there are many examples, for example, when the Turkish nationalists defeated all others in Anatolia after the First World War in order to form a government, they had, in general, the majority support from the people and their religious leaders. But then, with independence established, the Republic's political and military elite

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<sup>246</sup> This follows a well known historical debate that maintains that the earliest modern states of Europe became states before they became nations. For a study of this position see, Kitromilides, P.K. (1989) "Imagined Communities, and the Origins of the National Question in the Balkans," *European History Quarterly*, Vol. 1, no. 2, pp. 165-193.

proceeded to dismantle the Ottoman-Muslim institutions and practices of the state, sometimes quite severely.

European secular-liberal modernism has then contributed significantly to the constitution and meaning of secularism within Turkey. One consequence of this is that the notion of secularism in contemporary Turkey has little if any significant place for its Ottoman-Islamic heritage. What came to develop from the internal and external conflict over the long period of Ottoman decline was a specific notion of secularism. A notion that was articulated by the state and *attempted* a closure of meaning and *attempted* to exclude oppositional ideas to that which the newly formed Kemalist secular government desired. This involved the Turkish notion of secularisation being 'exclusive' of the traditions of many Turkish people.

### **Secularism and Nationalism**

Some might argue that the history of the emergence of modern Turkey can be summarised as a 'transition from the multinational [or multicultural] Ottoman Empire to the monocultural Kemalist Republican model.' Nationalism is then emphasised as the main element of Kemalism in this transition or transformation and the relationship between Kemalist nationalism and the western nationalism needs to be investigated. Furthermore, it becomes necessary to determine the degree to which western nationalism might have played as a role model with its conceptualisation of the nation-state as the only possible political and social formation that the Kemalists could embrace to save the country.

The main problem with this approach is the unstated assumption that such concepts as ethnicity, citizenship, national identity, and nationality can be applied to a non-Western setting in just the same way as they could be done so in the West. In addition, this approach also assumes that there had been well developed ethnic identities before the advent of nationalism or Kemalism,<sup>247</sup> including a fixed Turkish ethnic identity with well-defined boundaries, which would then form the basis of Turkish national identity.

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<sup>247</sup> I emphasise the distinction between nationalism and Kemalism, because they are not identical at all. To complicate matters even further, just as there have been a number of different threads in the development of the Kemalist discourse, leading to the possibility of a variety of different Kemalisms, there were also different nationalisms, whose commonalities with Kemalism had considerable variation as well.



I argue that the identity question in the Ottoman and Turkish case has evolved in ways that are fundamentally different than the West. The ethnic identities in the late Ottoman period were nowhere near as fixed as they had been in the West for a long time, and the religious and sectarian affiliations were much stronger. More importantly, secularism played a defining role in the crystallisation of national (or nationalist) identities. Finally, Kemalism attempted to redefine what it means to be a Turk through secularism emptied of all associations with the Ottoman Turkish tradition as symbolised by Islam.

### *Three Courses of Political Action: Ottomanism, Islamism and Turkism/Nationalism*

The emergence of Turkish nationalism has been the subject of many detailed studies.<sup>248</sup> It is usually observed that nationalism first got its start among the Orthodox Christians in the Balkans, first the Greeks, then the Serbs, Bulgars, etc, then the idea of nationalism spread like a wildfire and eventually contributed a great deal to the demise of the Ottoman polity. Turkish nationalism was the very last nationalism to develop, hence it was more of a reaction and a measure of last resort. Turkish nationalism was also heavily influenced by the previous 'strategies' of the Ottoman administrators to keep the loyalty of all people and prevent the dissolution of the state.

The first strategy employed against the centrifugal effects of nationalism was Ottomanism, a state policy designed to unite the diverse groups in the empire under a shared political identity symbolised by loyalty to the Ottoman monarch. Mahmud II famously declared 'I would like to distinguish my subjects only if they are at a mosque, a church, or a synagouge.' The Tanzimat edict of 1839 and the Reform edict of 1856 were both attempts to secure the loyalty of the non-Muslim subjects of the empire, since they both contained measures towards bringing them to an equal status with the Muslims.<sup>249</sup>

Until the Tanzimat period, non-Muslims could not become civil servants or administrators, but as Ortaylı notes, non-Muslims entered Ottoman civil service in large numbers in the nineteenth century. Notable examples included Kostaki Musurus Pasha, a Greek from Crete, who served as the Ottoman ambassador in London for 35 years. When he finally retired in 1885, he was the most senior Ottoman diplomat, for which he was given the honorific title 'master of the

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<sup>248</sup> See for example Heyd, U. (1950) *Foundations of Turkish Nationalism: The Life and Teachings of Ziya Gökalp*, London: The Harvill Press; Kushner, D. (1977) *The Rise of Turkish Nationalism, 1876-1908*, London: Cass; Arai, M. (1992) *Turkish Nationalism in the Young Turk Era*, Leiden: Brill. For a general overview of nationalism in the Turkish political thought, see Bora, T. (ed.) (2002) *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce: Cilt 4, Milliyetçilik*, İstanbul: İletişim.

<sup>249</sup> Ortaylı, İ. (1999) *İmparatorluğun En Uzun Yüzyılı*, İstanbul: İletişim, p. 143

ambassadors' (*Şeyhü's-Süfera*).<sup>250</sup> Sava Paşa, another Ottoman statesman of Greek origin, served as provincial administrator, governor and minister in the 1870s and 1880s, but more importantly, he was a fine scholar of Islamic jurisprudence. His study on the theory of Islamic Law is still in print in Turkey, and a widely cited reference work on the subject.<sup>251</sup> Ortaylı asserts that 'in the 19th century, in no empire had those not belonging to the dominant religion been employed in public service as widely as they were in the Ottoman Empire.'<sup>252</sup>

The importance of religion in ethnic and national identity was not restricted to the Turks or Muslims in the Ottoman Empire. The Orthodox Christians in the Balkans experienced similar ambiguities and had to distinguish their own national identity from their Orthodox brethren. It is not a coincidence that the establishment of the national churches of Serbia and Bulgaria paralleled the development of the Serbian and Bulgarian nationalisms respectively. The remarkable story of Bulgarian educator Vasil Aprilov as summarised by İlber Ortaylı is instructive here.<sup>253</sup> Aprilov studied in Russia and Europe, but until 1831 he considered himself Greek, because he belonged to the Greek Orthodox Church. He 'discovered' his Bulgarian identity by reading Venelin's history of the Bulgarian people, but then Venelin was not a Bulgarian but Russian! The reason Venelin wrote a Bulgarian history was his identification with the Pan-Slavist ideas.

As the nineteenth century moved on, the Ottoman statesmen reluctantly realised that the flames of nationalism among the Christian subjects of the empire were simply too strong to extinguish. Hence, Islamism began to be promoted, especially from the reign of Abdülhamid II onwards, as a glue to hold the state together. The caliphate of the Ottoman sultan and the unity of the Islamic ummah under his leadership were strongly emphasised.

The critical issue here with respect to Turkish nationalism is that it was often next to impossible to disentangle 'Turk,' 'Muslim,' and 'Ottoman' as distinct identities. In Europe, the Ottomans were frequently referred to as 'the Grand Turk' especially in the sixteenth century, and the Ottoman Empire was regarded as the 'Turkish Empire.' As underlined by Donald Quataert, 'In the Balkan and Anatolian lands, Ottoman Christians informally spoke of "Turks" when in fact they meant Muslims. "Turk" was a kind of shorthand for referring to Muslims of every sort...'<sup>254</sup> In 1910 the *Encyclopedia of Britannica* article on Bosnia and Herzegovina described the ethnic situation of its people in following manner: 'The natives are officially described as Bosniaks, but classify themselves according to religion. Thus the Roman Catholics prefer the name of Croats,

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<sup>250</sup> Şafak, N. (2006) "Bir Tanzimat Diplomati: Kostaki Musurus Paşa (1807-1891)," Unpublished PhD thesis, Marmara University, p. 34.

<sup>251</sup> Sava Paşa (2002) *İslam Hukuku Nazariyatı Hakkında Bir Etüd*, 2 vols., İstanbul: Kitabevi.

<sup>252</sup> Ortaylı, İ. (1999) *İmparatorluğun En Uzun Yüzyılı*, p. 143

<sup>253</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 85-86.

<sup>254</sup> Quataert, D. (2005) *The Ottoman Empire, 1700-1922*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 175.

Hrvats or Latins; the Orthodox, of Serbs; the Moslems, of Turks.<sup>255</sup> During the break-up of Yugoslavia and the ensuing war over Bosnia, the Serbs referred to Bosnian Muslims as 'Turks' in a disparaging manner.

Like the Christians,<sup>256</sup> the Muslims in the Ottoman Empire included a large number of different groups, including Turks, Arabs, Kurds, Bosniaks, Albanians, Lazs, Georgians, Circassians which were divided into so many subgroups such as Abkhaz, Chechens, Ossets, Kabartays, Balkars, Ubikhs, etc. Even from a modern ethnographic and anthropological point of view, the Turks could be considered to include many groups in themselves, such as the Türkmens, Yörüks, Tatars (which could be further divided into those of Anatolia, Crimea, and Kazan), Uygurs, Azeris, etc. While it was possible to 'divide' the Muslims into ever smaller micro-communities and come up with a multitude of ethnic identities, Turkish nationalism emerged as a cultural nationalism since it largely appropriated the heritage of Ottomanism and Islamism, where the boundaries were quite open and inclusion criteria were very wide.

Turkish nationalism borrowed from Ottomanism a strong sense of inclusive identity. The simple fact being an Ottoman subject was sufficient for inclusion in Ottomanism, which was then reflected in the constitutional definitions of Turkish identity through citizenship: 'Anyone tied to the Turkish state through the bonds of citizenship is a Turk.' In similar fashion, the universalist appeal of Islamism was derived from the fact that becoming a Muslim was simply a declaration of faith. There are countless examples in the Ottoman court registers over a time span of centuries, where non-Muslims from all around the region and from within the empire would come to the court and take the declaration of faith in the presence of two witnesses, which would then be duly recorded. After conversion to Islam, there was no stigma left from the convert's non-Muslim past, and we regularly come across converts quickly rising in the Ottoman bureaucratic hierarchy. In the Kemalist discourse, the ease with which one could convert to Islam was reflected in Mustafa Kemal's famous declaration at the end of his 'Address to the Turkish Youth' that he delivered at the end of his *Grand Speech*: How happy he is who says I am a Turk! The Kemalist discourse strongly underlines the fact that Mustafa Kemal *did not* say 'How happy he is who *is* a Turk.'

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<sup>255</sup> "Bosnia and Herzegovina," (1910) *Encyclopedia Britannica*, vol. 4, p. 281.

<sup>256</sup> Even the Jews in the Ottoman Empire contained many different groups. Besides the native Sephardim and Romaniot communities, there were Ashkenazim, the Qaraites, etc as well.

As in many places throughout the thesis, a closer look at the terminology used for the concepts of 'nation' and 'nationalism' will illuminate how influential Kemalist secularism was. The term 'nation' has been translated into Turkish from the Tanzimat period onwards through a number of words, which describe a people that are bound to each other in ties of varying strength, including religion, kinship, or language, however the most widely circulated term was *millet* (with the derived form *milliyetçilik* for nationalism). However, this Arabic origin word was not new; it had a well known meaning of religious origin.

The most widely known use of the term *millet* in the historical and political context is the so-called '*millet system*' in the Ottoman Empire. While the Muslims formed the 'sovereign nation' ('*millet-i hakime*') in the empire, the Christians and the Jews were considered to form separate nations according to the sectarian divisions. Hence, the Greek Orthodox were known as the '*Rum milleti*' (*Rum* deriving from the Roman or Byzantine) and the Jews were known as the '*Yahudi milleti*.' Since the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire were divided into three sects, the Orthodox, the Catholic and the Protestant Armenians, each one formed a separate nation. According to Islamic Law, the political and social bond between the non-Muslims and the state, which was constituted by the Muslim community, was called *dhimma*. Each *millet* was represented and headed by its chief religious authority. Although a full discussion of the Ottoman *millet* system is beyond the scope of this thesis, it should suffice to say that it survived into the Republican period through the minority rights granted to the Greek Orthodox, Armenian and Jewish communities in Turkey in the Lausanne Treaty.

Apart from the Ottoman *millet* system and even before that, *millet* denoted a religious community. In one well-known usage, *millet* referred to the monotheistic heritage of the great Patriarch Abraham. Accordingly, the communion of believers following a prophet would be called as *ümme* (*ummah*), hence the followers of Prophet Muhammad would be called as *ümme-i Muhammed*. But all these *ümmets* belonged to a larger, all-encompassing community, called the *millet* of Abraham.<sup>257</sup> The 'nation' in the name of the Black Muslim group in the USA, the Nation of Islam, is nothing but *millet*, in the same spirit. In similar vein, not only Islam, but its opposite,

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<sup>257</sup> In the Islamic catechism books (*ilmihal*) it was taught that after someone dies and buried in a grave, the Angels of Interrogation will come and ask him basic questions about his faith. The questions and their respective answers are then recorded meticulously for the readers to learn by heart. These questions include 'Which nation do you belong to?' and the answer is: 'I belong to the nation of Abraham.' The next question is 'Which ummah do you belong to?' then the answer is: 'I belong to the ummah of Muhammad (PBUH)' See Kara, İ. (ed.) (1998) *Mızraklı İlmihal*, İstanbul: Dergah Yay.

the unbelief, was conceptualised as making up a single nation in the frequently cited Islamic aphorism: 'Unbelief is one nation.' ('*Küfür tek millettir*')<sup>258</sup>

*Religion determining the Nationality in the Population Exchange between Turkey and Greece after the Lausanne Treaty*

The importance that religion played in the formation of not only the Turkish identity but the Greek identity as well is best demonstrated in the case of the population exchange between Turkey and Greece that was agreed on in the Lausanne Treaty in July 1923 and executed in 1924-25. Accordingly, all the 'Turks' living within Greece except those in Western Thrace were to emigrate to Turkey, whereas all the 'Greeks' living within Turkey except those in Istanbul were to emigrate to Greece. Yet, the population exchange was not only between the Turks and Greeks, but between the Muslims and the Greek Orthodox Christians.<sup>259</sup>

In Anatolia, the *Karamanlis* were a people who spoke Turkish and who prayed in Turkish. Even their gravestones were written in Turkish language, but in the Greek alphabet. Yet, because they were Christians, they were considered as 'Greek' and included in the population exchange with the rest of the Greek Orthodox. Likewise, some of the 'Turks' deported from Greece, especially from the island of Crete, spoke Greek and did not know any Turkish at all. But they were considered as 'Turks' because they were Muslim. As Keyder notes, the concept of ethnicity that both the Greek and Turkish authorities subscribed to was based on religion to a large degree. 'In other words, 'the [Turkish] nation' was preconceived in the minds of its founders as one constituted of Muslims, and it was this principle that they applied during the exchange.'<sup>260</sup>

Later in this chapter, I discuss the radical change in Mustafa Kemal's public declarations on the question of Turkish national identity in the specific examples of his opening speech to the Turkish Parliament in Ankara in 1920 and another speech he gave in 1925. In just a year or two, the definition of nation as *millet*, based on the Ottoman Turkish/Islamic tradition, would be abandoned in favour of a brand new definition of nation as *ulus*, based on Kemalist secularism.

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<sup>258</sup> As an illustration of the Islamist view on the unity of 'unbelief' see the following with the eponymous title, Çelik, M. (1999) *Küfür Tek Millettir*, İstanbul: Ölçü.

<sup>259</sup> Keyder, Ç. (2003) "The Consequences of the Exchange of Populations for Turkey," in R. Hirschon (ed.), *Crossing the Aegean: An Appraisal of the 1923 Compulsory Population Exchange*, New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, pp. 39-63.

<sup>260</sup> *Ibid*, p. 42.

### *National Pact as the basis of Turkish War for Liberation*

On 28 January 1920, the Ottoman Turkish Parliament passed a resolution that came to be known as the 'National Pact' which would form the basis of Turkish demands during the War for Liberation. At the time, the parliament was still in Istanbul, which was under unofficial Allied occupation due to the terms of the Mudros ceasefire agreement of 30 October 1918. This resolution declared that 'the territories inhabited by an Ottoman Muslim majority (united in religion, race and aim) formed an indivisible whole.'<sup>261</sup> It then demanded a plebiscite to be held in the lands, which were then under foreign occupation and where the Arabs formed a majority.<sup>262</sup> Although the National Pact recognised the possibility of the Arab people choosing to have a separate independent existence, it did not altogether rule out their exclusion if they decided to stay together.

With the major exceptions of the Mosul and Kirkuk provinces in the southeast and the Batumi region in the northwest, the area that the 'National Pact' resolution referred to roughly corresponds to the area of modern Turkey. The 'Turkishness' that the National Pact defined was still based on Islam, with the possible exception of the Arabs.

### *From Millet to Ulus: Secularising the Turkish National Identity*

The clearest example of secularising the Turkish national identity can be seen in the invention of a new word, *ulus*, to replace *millet*, because it was too Islamic. During the War for Liberation, the central tenet of the National Assembly in Ankara was 'national sovereignty' (*'hakimiyeti milliye'*) but again, the 'nation' envisaged here was more Islamic than secular. *Hakimiyeti Milliye* was the name of the semi-official Kemalist newspaper in Ankara. In the 1930s, during the language reform, the religious connotations of *millet* became increasingly difficult to keep in the Kemalist discourse, and a new word *ulus*, of allegedly 'pure Turkish' origin, was brought into circulation. Accordingly, *ulus* was an ancient Turkish word that had been used to describe political formations of nomadic tribes in Central Asia, but most importantly, it did not have any Islamic resonance. Hence, in 1934, the *Hakimiyeti Milliye* newspaper changed its name to *Ulus*.

Technically, *millet* and *ulus* meant the same thing, since *ulus* was invented specifically to replace *millet*, however, since this operation also tried to get rid of the religious and traditional connotations of *millet*, it was impossible for *ulus* to completely replace *millet*. There was a clearly

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<sup>261</sup> Zürcher, E. J. (1997) *Turkey: A Modern History*, London: IB Tauris, p. 138.

<sup>262</sup> This also points out a deliberate withdrawal strategy on the part of the Ottoman Turkish army in October 1918 in southern Anatolia to form a possible line of defence that roughly corresponded to the somewhat ambiguous boundary between the Turks and Arabs.

identifiable difference in the meanings of these two words, hence we have this peculiar situation, as in many word-pairs in Turkish, that *millet* and *ulus* mean the same thing while meaning two different things at the same time!<sup>263</sup> In time, for example, such common phrases as ‘national-spiritual values’ (*‘milli-manevi değerler’*) entered into circulation. Here, since the term ‘national’ was related to *millet*, it referred to nation in the sense of Ottoman Turkish tradition. Therefore, one would never come across this phrase in the writings of the Kemalists, who might use the term ‘national values’ (*‘ulusal değerler’*) in a way indicating their secularist orientation. Another frequently used phrase was ‘nationalist-conservative’ (*‘milliyetçi-muhafazakar’*). As the use of the word *milliyetçi*, derived from *nation*, indicates, this nationalism was definitely not the Kemalist nationalism. It was infused with and promoted religious values and symbols. Its conservatism was not fiscal or political conservatism in the western sense, but social conservatism, which tried to ‘conserve’ the Islamic values and the Ottoman Turkish tradition against the onslaught of westernisation and Kemalist secularism. The same distinction held true in the naming scheme of the well-known Islamist political movement, ‘the National Outlook,’ under the charismatic leadership of Necmettin Erbakan. Not surprisingly, the nation that was being talked about was not the secular *ulus*, but the Ottoman Turkish/Islamic *millet*.

In summary, Kemalist nationalism differed sharply from Turkish nationalism of the Ottoman period and this difference defined its character. Kemalism’s answer to the question ‘Who is a Turk?’ was a radical and antagonising answer, whose ultimate aim was to come up with a militantly secular definition of Turkishness that excluded the Ottoman Turkish tradition represented under the general signifier of Islam. In 1926, Ruşeni (Barkın), an MP in the Republican People Party, published a book titled *There is No Religion, Just Nationality: My Turkishness is My Religion*. Ruşeni presented a copy of his book to Mustafa Kemal, who read it with keen interest and congratulated the author for his efforts.<sup>264</sup> As I discuss in Chapter Four below, the new definition of Turkishness that Kemalism pressed for placed Mustafa Kemal as Atatürk, the ‘Father of the Turks.’ Just as a father would give his name to his children, who would be identified in relation to their father, Atatürk gave the new Turks their secular identity. The role played by Islam played in the formation of the Ottoman Turkish tradition was put aside and replaced by Kemalist secularism.

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<sup>263</sup> In Chapter Two, I have studied similar word pairs, *çağdaş* vs *muasır* and *uygarlık* vs *medeniyet*.

<sup>264</sup> Ruşeni (Barkın) (1926) *Din Yok, Milliyet Var: Benim Dinim, Benim Türklüğümdür*. The facsimilae of the pages from Mustafa Kemal’s copy where he scribbled many notes and underlined many lines are published in Cengiz, R. (ed.) (2001) *Atatürk’ün Okuduğu Kitaplar*, vol. 8, Ankara: Anıtkabir Derneği Yay.

## Islam as a 'problem' in contemporary Turkey

In the words of one observer, 'there is almost no issue in Turkey that does not have some relationship with religion.'<sup>265</sup> Likewise, from its establishment onwards, 'Islam' was a central problem in the Turkish Republic that the ruling Kemalist cadres had to deal with. The operative word here is 'problem.' Indeed, Islam was and still is a 'problem' in many senses. Firstly, Islam had been the primary source of legitimation for the Ottoman polity, and despite contrary claims and numerous attacks, it still remains so in modern Turkey.<sup>266</sup> The symbols of the state are filled with references to Islamic notions. The crescent and star of the Turkish flag represents Islam, as it is also found in the flags of some other Muslim nations, most notably Pakistan. More importantly, it was not a new adoption at the foundation of the Turkish Republic nor had it been changed from something else during the heyday of the Kemalist reforms. Rather, it had been the flag of the Ottoman Empire, constituting a powerful link between the old and new regimes in Turkey.

The Turkish national anthem, composed by the Islamist poet Mehmed Akif (Ersoy), refers to the 'nation who worships *Hak*' where *Hak*, meaning 'the Righteous,' is one of the 99 names of God in Islam, yet the word 'Turk' does not appear once throughout the full ten quadrants of the poem. Clearly, the nation that the national anthem talks about is based on the communion of Islamic brotherhood than a narrower, ethnicity or race-based understanding, as the foundation of Turkishness. One of the aims of secularisation was to redefine the Turkish identity by purging any reference to Islam. I will expand on this point later.

Secondly, the thesis 'Islam is a barrier towards progress' was quite a powerful explanation to the question 'What was the culprit behind the backward status that the Turks/Muslims found themselves in during the modern era?' As we have seen in Chapter One, this thesis had been advanced in the Orientalist discourse in Europe. Once Islam was identified as a barrier, the solution presented itself straightforwardly: it had to be removed. Among the Kemalists, there were certainly many people who were allured by the promise of positivism and who subscribed to the belief that science and technology would solve all the problems of mankind. However, there was also another line of thought, which regarded religion as a useful vehicle to instil morality in people. This conception of religion was a humanistic and universalistic one and it emphasised the personal over the social aspects. Clearly, Islam as it had been was not that ideal religion, but many authors, from Ziya Gökalp to Abdullah Cevdet envisioned a 'reformed Islam' that would fit this description. It would be an Islam free from the Arab influence. It would be a Turkified version of Islam and working towards such a transformation was regarded as one of the most important

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<sup>265</sup> Kara, İ. (2008) *Cumhuriyet Türkiye'sinde Bir Mesele Olarak İslam*, İstanbul: Dergah Yay., p. 6. Incidentally, the book's title, *Islam as a Problem in Republican Turkey*, is spot on this issue.

<sup>266</sup> I will discuss the question of legitimation in detail in Chapter Four.



tasks towards the creation of new Turkey. I shall have more to say on this point below when I study the views of Ahmed Hamdi, an advisor to Mustafa Kemal, on how the question of secularism and the role of Islam. He opposed the understanding of secularism prevalent in early 1930's, which took a hostile attitude towards religion and attempted to minimise its role in society, and advocated an alternative understanding of secularism, which acknowledged the prominent role of religion in society and then tried to *use* it to advance the Kemalist views and *control* it at the same time.

Thirdly, Islam was not something the regime could simply ignore or stay neutral towards, because it clearly held the potential to be used in the hands of the opposition. On the other hand, Islam, or rather, the threat of the zealous and bigoted people and groups acting in the name of Islam and trying to take the country backwards, would prove to be an immensely useful scarecrow. This threat, frequently called *irtica*, which had entered the political language in Turkey after the '31 March affair' in 1909, would be used to mobilise the revolutionary forces of Kemalism time after time, from the earliest days of the republic. The case of the Progressive Republican Party provides a clear illustration of this point.

According to Zürcher, the programme of the Progressive Republican Party (*Terakkiperver Cumhuriyet Fırkası*) clearly indicated that 'it was a party in the Western European liberal mould. It stood for secular and nationalist policies, like the majority party, but it clearly opposed its radical, centralist and authoritarian tendencies.'<sup>267</sup> But, the party was vilified by the Kemalists because its programme also included an article stating that the party was 'respectful of the religious thoughts and faiths.' This statement alone was considered as sufficient proof that the Progressive Party wanted to take Turkey backwards, annul the republic and reinstate the sultanate and caliphate.<sup>268</sup>

Regarding the challenge of the Progressive Republican Party to Mustafa Kemal's leadership and plans for reform, Feroz Ahmad is simply content in stating that 'With rivals actively exploiting the very real economic discontent then widespread in the country, it would be virtually impossible to enact any radical legislation, legislation which the Kemalists considered vital for transforming Turkey.'<sup>269</sup> What he fails to acknowledge is that in 1924-25, there was no way the Republican People Party could stay in power in a democratic environment with free elections and free press, which was the main reason for that party's closure.

Throughout his political career, Mustafa Kemal had never participated in a real and free election. Throughout the history of the Turkish Republic, the Republican People Party, the party founded

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<sup>267</sup> Zürcher, E. J. (1997) *Turkey: A Modern History*, London: IB Tauris, p. 176.

<sup>268</sup> Kemalism's insistence on antagonising any opposition or criticism was discussed in the final sections of Chapter Two.

<sup>269</sup> Ahmad, F. (1993) *The Making of Modern Turkey*, London: Routledge, p. 58.

by Mustafa Kemal, has never received the electorate's mandate in free elections.<sup>270</sup> The closest the RPP got towards transforming the 'various democratic demands to popular demands'<sup>271</sup> was in the period 1974-77, under the leadership of Bülent Ecevit, but then the RPP of that period was as far away from Kemalism as it could possibly be.<sup>272</sup> Ecevit's movement would not live long, and ultimately be cut off by the 1980 coup d'état, which brought its own version of conservative Kemalism. Under these circumstances, I do not know how we can ever talk about a Kemalist hegemony in operation in Turkey, as Betül Çelik claims.<sup>273</sup> When describing the political situation in Turkey after the elimination of all opposition in 1925-26, Feroz Ahmad's words tread the boundary between irony and sarcasm: 'Hereafter, all political activity outside the ruling party ceased. The country acquired political stability for the first time since 1908.'<sup>274</sup>

### Kemalist Reforms, Secularism and Islam

Regarding the issue of 'Islam as a problem,' I have one final aspect to discuss. If we look at the Kemalist reforms in general, we see that nearly all of them were related, either directly or indirectly, with religion.<sup>275</sup> Article 174 of the 1982 constitution lists the revolutionary laws of Kemalism and in effect puts them even above the rest of the constitution, by declaring that 'No provision of the constitution can be understood or interpreted in a way to render the provisions of the following revolutionary laws, in effect on the date the constitution was approved by popular vote, which were enacted for the purpose of raising the Turkish society above the level of contemporary civilisation and for the purpose of protecting the quality of secularism of the Republic of Turkey.'<sup>276</sup> A closer look at the laws listed in that article establishes the centrality of

<sup>270</sup> Nişanyan, S. (2008) *Yanlış Cumhuriyet*, İstanbul: Kırmızı Yay., pp. 39-53.

<sup>271</sup> I am referring here to Laclau's views on populism. See Laclau, E. (2005) *On Populist Reason*, p. 74.

<sup>272</sup> In fact, the bureaucratic-intellectual elite brand of Kemalism had ceded from the RPP and established a separate party, first the Reliance Party, which later became The Republican Reliance Party. Zürcher, E.J. (1997) *Turkey: A Modern History*, p. 266, 273; Ahmad, F. (1993) *The Making of Modern Turkey*, pp. 144, 156-158. The party's slogan was 'Atatürk's path is our path.' It declared its opposition to both liberalism and socialism. The party's congress in 1980 was named 'Call to Atatürkism.'

<sup>273</sup> Çelik, N.B. (1996) "Kemalist Hegemony from Its Constitution to Its Dissolution," Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Essex; Çelik, N.B. (2000) "The constitution and dissolution of the Kemalist imaginary," in Howarth, D., Norval, A., and Stavrakakis, Y. (eds.), *Discourse Theory and Political Analysis: Identities, Hegemonies and Social Change*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, pp. 193-204; Çelik, N.B., (2001) "Kemalizm: Hegemonik Bir Söylem" in İnel, A. (ed.), *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce: Cilt 2, Kemalizm (Political Thought in Modern Turkey: Volume 2, Kemalism)*, İstanbul: İletişim Yay, pp. 75-91.

<sup>274</sup> Ahmad, F. (1993) *The Making of Modern Turkey*, p. 58.

<sup>275</sup> Kara, İ. (2008) *Cumhuriyet Türkiye'sinde Bir Mesele Olarak İslam*, p. 31.

<sup>276</sup> The Turkish original of the article is as awful. It would have been more straightforward and simpler to say 'the secular quality' but the text talks of 'the quality of secularism.' The article confuses its *raison d'être* with that of the revolutionary laws it is trying to protect. The revolutionary laws were *not* enacted to protect secularism; they were constituted to *establish* secularism in Turkey.

the problem of religion, and shows that the Kemalist discourse of secularism mostly 'solved' this problem by denying religion any existence in the public sphere, and limiting or simply denying the basic democratic rights. Let us have look at these laws in some detail.

1. **'The Law for the Unification of Teaching,'** (*Tevhid-i Tedrisat Kanunu*) passed on 3 March 1924 ostensibly put an end to the confusion in the Turkish education system, which was split up into many different schools without a central oversight, by making all the schools responsible to the Ministry of National Education, but the most important outcome of this law was the closing down of the *medreses* (or, *madrasah* in Arabic orthography) and other religious schools. The law originally included military schools as well, but after a few years, they were returned under direct control of the military.

During the single party regime, no outlet for religious education was permitted in Turkey. The few religious scholars, who dared to admit students in the privacy of their homes did it by taking great risks. I would like to illustrate this point by one poignant event that took place in rural Trabzon in 1935, as told by an eye-witness to anthropologist Michael Meeker in 1988:

'I was teaching ... during the year 1935. This was the peak of the programme of secular reforms that had been put in place by Atatürk. A report came to the sub-district that a certain individual was giving lessons from a book in the old [Arabic] script. Members of the police, the gendarmerie, and myself set out to arrest this man. ... The man tried to run away but he was apprehended. He was shaking with fear. They had a warrant for his arrest. But he was ninety years old. They took his books, but they didn't have the heart to take him in. He was not involved in politics. He was only teaching. They decided to put the warrant away. They did not destroy it. It would be overlooked.'<sup>277</sup>

Meeker observes that in the narrative of this Kemalist teacher, 'it was only the very aged who had been unable to accept the new regime, and state officials had treated these individuals with discretion and humanity.' What Meeker does not state explicitly is that in the eyes of the teacher, and actually all Kemalists, there was no contradiction with respect to the civil rights and democratic liberties, in persecuting the *not so* very aged, whose only 'crime' was to try to teach religion in the new secular republic.

After World War II, many *imam-hatip* high schools and *ilahiyat* faculties were opened, but they were all under close surveillance. In the countryside, the gendarmerie routinely persecuted voluntary religious teachers. This inclination to keep the religious education under tight government control would culminate in 1997 during the so-called 28 February process, when it was made illegal to give *any* religious education to children below fifth grade.

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<sup>277</sup> Meeker, M. (2002) *A Nation of Empire*, University of California Press, p. 80.

The defence of Niyazi Berkes regarding the restrictions on religious education is sufficient to declare him as the prominent apologist for Kemalist secularism. He categorically declares that 'opening religious schools or schools for the purpose of religious instruction was not prohibited,' but then adds in parentheses: '(Although no one appears to have exercised this freedom until recently)' (!)<sup>278</sup> The Orwellian irony of his words seems to be lost on him. In similar fashion, we find in the newspapers of the 1930s, stories declaring that candidates for general elections were determined by the Republican People Party and submitted to the authorities, who had been tied with the party under the 'one state, one leader, one party' principle anyway. The newspapers then add, without comment, that 'there were no other applications for candidacy besides the RPP candidates.' Clearly, in a regime that did not allow free elections nor any opposition of any kind, it mattered little if the laws did or did not include any prohibition against religious instruction. The outcome was just the same.

2. **'The Law about Wearing Hats' (1925)** was directed against the expression of Islam in the public sphere. After the law, people were forbidden to put on Islamic headgear, and wearing the western hat was mandated on all government officials. Of all the Kemalist revolutionary reforms, the hat reform might well be the one that wasted any possibility of a rapprochement between the Kemalist elite and the people. For the masses, the hat law was as cryptic and foreign as the west's supremacy of the last centuries in the fields of science and technology. In the words of Sevan Nişanyan, the introduction of the hat law was a 'fantasy.'<sup>279</sup> After the hat law, it is no longer meaningful to talk about a Kemalist hegemony, because the law has opened up a wedge between the Kemalist elites and the people and destroyed any chance that the Kemalist elite might have had in providing a 'moral and intellectual leadership' to the people. The hat law has also been an Orwellian intrusion into the people's private lives, with which Kemalism wanted to show everyone that it was powerful enough to do so. One might call this 'power,' or 'domination,' but never hegemony.<sup>280</sup>

Regarding the Hat Law, the defence of Berkes is even less convincing. He devotes a single paragraph to the topic, never addressing the undemocratic and suppressive character of the law. He does not talk about the widespread protests, which were suppressed by the government by using disproportionate force. He claims that 'the traumatic nature of the change made it, unconsciously, a mass reaction against the traditionalists and conservatives. It was at this time that the latter first felt themselves choked by an enveloping unseen force. For the first time they felt utterly powerless and defeated.'<sup>281</sup> This is all Berkes has to say on the hat reform. He does not

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<sup>278</sup> Berkes, N. (1964) *The Development of Secularism in Turkey*, p. 466.

<sup>279</sup> Nişanyan, S. (2008) *Yanlış Cumhuriyet*, p. 428.

<sup>280</sup> An analysis of Mustafa Kemal's famous speech in Kastamonu on the hat reform is found in Chapter One.

<sup>281</sup> Berkes, N. (1964) *The Development of Secularism in Turkey*, p. 474.

discuss how such a reform could further the cause of secularism, properly understood in the western sense. It is true that the 'traditionalists and conservatives' felt being choked, but it was not because they had lost a hegemonic struggle against the Kemalist discourse, but because they were forced to adopt a lifestyle that meant renouncing their faith and their whole world-view.

Today, the stipulations of the Hat Law are hardly enforced. With the decline in the habit of hat wearing in the west from the 1950s onwards, the government officials and the MPs, who were required to wear the hat, gradually abandoned the practice and today, individuals wearing western style hats are a rarity in Turkey. On the other hand, the ban against the Muslim turban has not been as strictly applied as it was the case during the single party years. In the countryside and in certain quarters of the cities, most notably the Fatih district in Istanbul, men wearing the Muslim turban is a frequent sight on the streets. But the Hat Law remains in force and as part of the revolutionary laws of Kemalism, it is under constitutional protection. Still, if a religious group rises up, openly challenges Kemalism and becomes prominent, they will be persecuted by violating the Hat Law.

**3.** Another law passed in 1925 closed down all Sufi convents (*tekkes* and *zaviyes*) and tombs of the saints, Ottoman sultans and other past dignitaries. The Sufi convents had been important centres in the Ottoman Turkish society; they served a variety of functions and they played critical roles in the horizontal and vertical cobweb of social relations and interactions. A unique culture with rich traditions had developed around the Sufi convent, with its own literature, music, customs and manners. With the closure of the Sufi convents, Sufi orders were also outlawed overnight. This resulted in the peculiar situation that there were hundreds of thousands of individuals, who felt a spiritual and moral connection to a particular Sufi way and who counted a Sufi sheikh as their mentor and guide, yet this whole network was now illegal and had to go 'underground.' How could such a reform, which was in effect nothing but a legal and administrative measure, completely eradicate such a significant chunk of the Ottoman Turkish social order? Clearly it was an impossible task, but, as with many of the other reforms, the Kemalists sincerely believed that it was achievable. I have already discussed this under the subheading 'Kemalism: Rupture or Continuity? Reform or Revolution?' in Chapter Two, so I will not go into details again.

The closure of the Sufi convents radically changed the religious culture in Turkey, and for the most part, the changes were for the worse. Most importantly, this reform ensured that the rise of Islamic groups and a new class of Islamist intellectuals from the 1950s onwards happened in a reactionary way and mostly without the guidance and hindsight of the Ottoman Turkish tradition. From the 1970's onwards, the works of Islamist writers from around the Islamic world, from Sayyid Qutb of Egypt to Abu'l Ala Al Maududi of Pakistan had become fashionable among the

Islamist university students in Turkey, while the important works of Turkish Islamists from the second constitutional period were mostly neglected.<sup>282</sup> This was only one of the detrimental effects that Kemalism's reckless interference with the Turkish society had resulted in, the effects of which are still being felt today. It would not be an exaggeration to state that one of the lasting legacies of Kemalism in Turkey has been on the newly emergent Islamic groups of the republican period, which were generally assumed to be as anti-Kemalist, or at least, as having a critical attitude towards Kemalism. The estrangement between the newly emergent Islamic groups and the Ottoman Turkish tradition, and the modernist character of these groups were the direct results of the secularist zeal of Kemalism.

According to Veit Bader, secularism must also guarantee equal associational freedoms and collective toleration. The continued ban on the Sufi orders is then nothing but a violation of the associational freedoms. As Bader points out, '*Turkish secularism violates the conditions of freedom and equality, combined in the liberal requirement of equal associational freedoms.*'<sup>283</sup>

4. Another legal reform that the Article 174 of the 1982 constitution placed under protection is 'the principle of civic wedding accepted by the Turkish Civil Code (1925), which stipulated that marriage contracts were to be drawn up in front of the civil wedding official' and the article 110 of the same law, which decreed that 'without presenting the official papers issued by the wedding official, no religious ceremony can be held. Nevertheless, the consummation of the wedding is not tied up to the performance of the religious ceremony.' This reform was touted as a significant step towards protecting women's rights in marriages, since it was ambitiously aimed at putting an end to unrecorded marriages that took place in front of an imam.

Without an official record of the wedding, the authorities could not protect the rights of a wife during or after the marriage, but that problem had already been recognised in the Ottoman period, and in time, with the increase in the written documentation in the court registers, there had already been a development towards keeping regular marriage records. In the Tanzimat period, the local imams were even barred from carrying out marriage ceremonies without a written note of permission from the *kadi*, and in the court registers of late nineteenth century, we see countless examples of such notes. In any case, there is no relation between the desire to keep regular wedding records and insist that *all marrying couples* had to undergo a civil wedding ceremony. The result of this law was the appearance of a dual notion of weddings, one performed in front of the civil official and the other in front of an imam. This led to the appearance of two types of marriages, one called the 'official marriage' and the other called

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<sup>282</sup> Sayyid Qutb's most controversial book, *Milestones* had been first published in 1966, after which date, more than fifteen editions by at least seven different publishers have since appeared in Turkey. Likewise, Maududi's *Four Terms According to the Qur'an* has been published many times in Turkish since 1974, and has been one of the most widely read books in the Islamist circles.

<sup>283</sup> Bader, Veit (2010) "Constitutionalizing secularism, alternative secularisms or liberal-democratic constitutionalism?," p. 20.

‘religious marriage.’ Hence there appeared two types of wives, one under ‘official marriage’ and the other (or, for polygamous marriages, the others) under ‘religious marriage.’ This was perhaps the most unintended manifestation of ‘secularism’ in Turkish social sphere.

This drama could, to a large extent be avoided, had the prevailing notion of secularism in Turkey not taken such a militant attitude towards religion, and recognised that forcing everybody to undergo marriage ceremonies in front of a civil official would not make Turkey more secular and that marriage ceremonies performed in front of an imam would be perfectly acceptable under the universal norms of secularism, *so long as* the marriage was kept under record and the legal rights of the marrying individuals were protected. Although giving people the option to get civil marriages was a secular reform, and could be considered as a positive step, it was then coupled with *forcing* everyone to that option, or in other words, leaving them with *no other* option.

5. **‘The law regarding the acceptance and use of Turkish letters’ (1928)** was the legal basis of the script reform, which banned the Arabic script and replaced it with the Latin script, is one of the laws protected by the constitution. ‘The law regarding the acceptance of the international numerals’ (1926) is related to the script reform and is also in the list of protected laws. The primary purpose of the script reform was not to facilitate Turkish people to learn how to read and write, but to cut off ties with the Ottoman Turkish tradition.

Since this overview is about the relationship between the Kemalist reform laws and religion, I will simply be content by stating that after the passing of this reform, an iconoclastic campaign was mounted against all sorts of written texts in Arabic script. But before moving on to that task, let me point out the curious identification ‘Turkish letters’ in the official title of the former and ‘international numerals’ in the title of the latter law. The fact that the newly adopted script was nothing but Latin script was simply glossed over. The Kemalists claimed that they were carrying out a revolution unique in the world and vehemently denied any charges of imitation or slavish appropriation. In fact, these constituted the primary criticism directed towards the Ottoman modernisation efforts in this period: the Kemalists accused the Ottoman reformers with being obsessed with cosmetic and shallow changes and called them as ‘wardrobe reformers.’ It is ironic that they ended up being just the same.

Throughout the country in countless incidents, especially in the countryside, people were persecuted by overzealous officials, simply because they kept religious books including Qur’ans in their households. There are many stories in which the villagers secretly buried stashes of books in Arabic script into the holes they dug underground.

In Konya, the Koyunoğlu library ranks among the most important private collections of manuscripts in Ottoman Turkish, Arabic and Persian in the world. This collection was gathered by the extraordinary efforts of İzzet Koyunoğlu, who as a civil servant had travelled extensively throughout Turkey in the 1930s and 1940s. Often times, when he visited a village and introduced

himself as a collector of books in Arabic script, the villagers would bring in books in their possession and give them to him without asking for compensation.

The Kemalist desire to break away with the Ottoman/Islamic past was so strong that in 1931, thousands of archival documents filling several train carriages were sold to Bulgaria as scrap paper. Part of the reason such a reckless decision could be taken was that the documents were in Arabic script. This wholesale dismantling of the archival treasures was only stopped when a researcher accidentally came upon a number of documents that had been swept in the wind from the train carriages at Sirkeci station to the streets of İstanbul. Thankfully, the Bulgarians had shown the respect that the Kemalist regime did not display towards this precious historical source and cultural heritage and preserved them in the Bulgarian archives. It would take until the 1980s to partially repair the damage and bring the microfilms of those documents. The total weight of the documents sold as scrap paper was between 30 and 50 tonnes! A partial catalogue of these documents is over 600 pages.<sup>284</sup> The disregard for the Ottoman past in those days were so rife that Paul Wittek, the Austrian historian of the origins of the Ottoman Empire, was walking on the streets in those days, and he found a document dating back from the earliest periods of Ottoman history, which turned out to be crucial.

The destruction of the Ottoman/Islamic written heritage was not restricted to the books or documents. In 1927, a law was passed to remove the imperial signs of the Ottoman sultans, known as *tuğra*, from the facades of the public buildings. The *tuğra* was a symbol of the sovereignty of the Ottoman sultan, hence its removal fit into the logic of republicanism and the principle of national sovereignty. Unfortunately, this drive to remove the *tuğras* from public buildings was quickly turned into an iconoclastic campaign to remove *all tuğras* from the facades of old buildings, including those at the mosques. Often times, the *tuğras* destroyed belonged to Ottoman sultans who reigned centuries ago. In the meantime, countless tombstones were destroyed either because they were written in Arabic script or because Islamic headgear was carved on top of these tombstones, which were considered to be offensive to the hat reform.<sup>285</sup>

**6. ‘The law regarding the abolition of certain titles and ranks such as Efendi, Bey, Paşa’ (1934)** could be understood in terms of Kemalism’s understanding of populism, which rejected all class distinctions and aimed at building a ‘classless society where there are no privileges.’ This law was clearly inspired by the French Revolution, which abolished all aristocratic titles and called everyone as *citoyen*, that is, ‘citizen.’ The first title in the list, Efendi, had been associated with the

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<sup>284</sup> *Bulgaristan’a Satılan Evrak ve Cumhuriyet Dönemi Arşiv Çalışmaları* (1993) Ankara: Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü; *Bulgaristan’daki Osmanlı Evrakı* (1994) Ankara: Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü.

<sup>285</sup> Eygi, M.Ş. (2003) *Yakın Tarihimizde Cami Kırımı*, İstanbul: Tarih ve İbret Yay., pp. 13-18; Eşref Edib (1967) *Kara Kitab*, İstanbul: Sebilürreşad Neşriyat, pp. 27-28.



learned hierarchy, of which the religious scholars were a significant part.<sup>286</sup> This law was in the spirit of other secularist reforms, which were aimed at undermining the position of Muslim scholars and high ranking members of the Sufi orders in society, and eroding their prestige. Mustafa Kemal's declaration that 'The Republic of Turkey cannot be a country of sheiks, dervishes, and ecstatic Sufis (*meczip*)!' meant that in the secularist Turkey, not only would these people be sidestepped, even their mere existence, regardless of how inconspicuous or 'low-profile' they are, would not be tolerated. In time, with the decline in the revolutionary zeal of Kemalism, the prohibition against the use of other, non-religious titles, such as 'bey' and 'Paşa' made a comeback, and today, the military generals are all called as 'Paşa.' As I have argued in the case of the Hat Law, there is a wedge between the contemporary reality, which does not fit the Kemalist ideal, and the legal fiction. The inability of Turkey to confront this mismatch is a symptom of the crisis of Kemalism.

**7. 'The law regarding the prohibition of the wear of certain attire' (1934)** was directed against the appearance of any religious costume in the public sphere. Accordingly, today there are only 4 persons in Turkey, who are allowed to retain their religious garb at all times: for the Muslim community, the chief of the *Diyanet*, for the Christian Armenians and Greeks, their respective patriarchs, and for the Jewish community, the chief rabbi. No other imam, priest, or rabbi is allowed to wear their religious garb on the streets. Kemalism wanted to limit religious life within the walls of the houses of worship.

In his overview of Kemalist secularism, Veit Bader sets out by the most frequently mentioned aspect of secularism, which is the 'autonomy' of the state from (organised) religions. The achievement of this autonomy might be considered as having succeeded in securing the 'secularity' of the state. Bader notes that this sense of secularism, as the "secularity" of the state seems to be the least contested, rock-bottom meaning of secularism.<sup>287</sup> After stating a number of reservations and objections to the implementation of this ideal, Bader underlines the importance of looking at the problem of autonomy between the state and the organised religions from both ends. The autonomy of the state from religious interference might be termed as the famous 'first autonomy,' which was heavily emphasised by the secularists. But then, Bader argues, there is 'also a "second" autonomy, the relative autonomy of (organized) religions from

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<sup>286</sup> As explained by Norman Stone in a CSD seminar in February 2008, the word 'efendi' comes from Greek 'authentis.' After the conquest of Constantinople in 1453, Mehmed II appointed the schismatic bishop Gennadios Scholarios as the Greek Orthodox Patriarch, and his Byzantine title Megas Authentis was confirmed. In time, 'authentis' became 'efendi' and its use was extended to Muslim scholars, too.

<sup>287</sup> Bader, Veit (2010) "Constitutionalizing secularism, alternative secularisms or liberal-democratic constitutionalism?," pp. 18-19.

the state. Self-declared “secular states” (e.g. Turkey, France) extensively violate this second autonomy (state supervision and control of religions ...)<sup>288</sup>

This brief overview of the Kemalist revolutionary laws related to secularism makes it clear that Kemalism’s understanding of reform mainly consisted of enacting and then enforcing laws, with little regard to what the people thought about them. With such a top-down approach, then, it was only natural that these reforms would have to be kept under protection. Firstly the ‘law to protect Atatürk’ was enacted after 1950; then the constitutional protection of the ‘revolutionary laws’ was introduced with the 1961 constitution.<sup>289</sup> We see how Kemalism solidified in time and became a dogmatic ideology.

### **What had changed from 1923 to 1925? Two Speeches of Mustafa Kemal on Islam’s Role**

Let us compare two speeches of Mustafa Kemal, and see how there was a marked change in the attitudes towards Islam in just a span of few years. On 1 May 1920, Mustafa Kemal Paşa was addressing the Turkish Grand National Assembly at Ankara on the definition of the ‘nation’ whose fate they were trying to save:

‘Gentlemen, ... What is desired here and the persons forming the composition of your Exalted Assembly are not only Turkish, not only Circassian, not only Kurdish, not only Laz. They are the Muslim elements (*unsûr*, pl. *anâsır*) consisting of all those, a sincere communion. Henceforth, what this exalted panel represents, and the dreams for which we set out to save its rights, life, honour and integrity, is not restricted to a single element of Islam; it belongs to the whole mass that is composed of Muslim elements. ... Hence, the nation whose defence and protection we are working for is naturally not composed of a single element. It consists of various Muslim elements. Every element of Islam that forms this community is our brother and our citizen whose interests are completely shared. ...’<sup>290</sup>

This speech, given only a week after the opening of the parliament in Ankara, at the beginning of the liberation struggle, clearly makes a distinction between ethnicity and nationality, and recognises the existence of several ethnic groups, whose common denominator was being Muslim. Hence, it identifies Islam as the basis of the nation. It should also be heavily underlined

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<sup>288</sup> *Ibid*, p. 19.

<sup>289</sup> The Article 174 of 1982 constitution appeared for the first time as article 153 of the 1961 constitution. While the 1961 constitution referred to these laws as ‘revolutionary laws’ (*devrim kanunları*), the language was softened to ‘reform/transformatory laws’ (*inkılap kanunları*) in the 1982 constitution.

<sup>290</sup> Mustafa Kemal (1920) *TBMM Zabıt Ceridesi*, Devre I, C 1, İctima Senesi 1, 1.5.1336 (1 May 1920), p. 165.

that the speech makes a distinction between Turkish as an ethnic identity and Turkish as a national identity, and herein lies the confusion that many observers of modern Turkey fall into. When someone refers to the 'Turkish nation,' it is not clear which notion of Turkishness is implied, and this is precisely due to the problematic position of Islam in Turkey.

Now, moving forward in time just five years, and looking at another speech of Mustafa Kemal, dated 5 November 1925, the change is striking:

'The shared connection that the nation has conceived, in order to continue its existence, has changed its form and essence that had continued for centuries, that is, the nation has gathered its members through the ties of Turkish nationality, instead of religious and confessional ties. The nation has made it a principle of unchanging truth that the knowledge and the means for the reason of life and reason of power in the general international field of struggle can only be found in the *contemporary civilisation*.'<sup>291</sup>

In 1920, Mustafa Kemal was placing Islam as the nation's constitutive element, whereas in 1925, he explicitly denounces his previous position and replaces it with Turkishness. But then, this will only be successful to the extent of defining Turkishness without reference to Islam, which would mean breaking away from the centuries-old association between the two, and attempting to create a new definition for Turkishness from which all Islamic elements have been purged.<sup>292</sup> This is the fundamental change of direction that has troubled Turkey ever since and has caused endless debates as to what had been responsible for it.

There are two competing 'explanations' for this sudden change of course. The first one was provided by Mustafa Kemal himself, most importantly in his great *Speech* in 1927, as well as in other places, where he claimed that he had been planning this for a long time coming. According to one well-known anecdote, during the Erzurum Congress in July 1919, he dictated to his friend Mazhar Müfit (Kansu) the following list of tasks that he planned to carry out after victory:

- '1-The form of government after victory shall be republican.
- 2- Regarding the sultan and the dynasty, necessary actions shall be taken when the time is ripe.
- 3- Veiling [of women] shall be removed.
- 4- The fez shall be removed, and hats (*chapka*) will be worn like civilised nations.
- 5- Latin script shall be accepted.'<sup>293</sup>

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<sup>291</sup> Karal, E.Z. (1981) *Atatürk'ten Düşünceler*, İstanbul: MEB Yay., p. 44. Italics are mine.

<sup>292</sup> This is a very broad subject, but here, I will simply be content with pointing out that during the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1990's, the Serbian nationalists were attacking the Bosniac Muslims as 'Turks.'

<sup>293</sup> Kansu, M.M. (1966) *Erzurum'dan Ölümüne Kadar Atatürk'le Beraber*, Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yay., pp. 130-132.

Though it may not be obvious at first sight, we see that all of the items in this list were linked to the problem of Islam. Although there had been a lot of discussions on the compatibility of republican ideals with the Islamic principles, the Kemalist version of republicanism had more to do with breaking away with tradition than these ideals. Moreover, the Kemalist discourse did not leave any space for groups criticising it in its republicanism. Frequently, it accused those, who dared to criticise it, even if they had repeatedly expressed their support for republicanism and secularism, with trying to destroy the republic and establish a 'theocracy' in its place or reinstate the sultanate/caliphate. Regarding the second task in the list, In the Ottoman formulation, the sultanate had become inseparable from the caliphate, hence the link with Islam again. The third and fourth tasks were directly related to the Islamic clothing. Finally, the Koran was written in Arabic script, which gave it a religious aura. Although it was usually justified with reference to its suitability to the Turkish language and its universality, replacing it with Latin script was a huge step towards alienation from the Islamic and Arabic civilisational sphere.

The second 'explanation' for this radical turn away from Islam, frequently championed by the Islamists, borders on conspiracy theories and posits a secret agreement that was reached during the Lausanne talks. Accordingly, the Kemalists had promised the British that they would abolish the caliphate and move away from Islam. In exchange, Turkey's independence would be recognised.

In referring to these 'explanations,' my aim has not been to discuss their historical validity or to argue in their favour. I just wanted to highlight the point that even for those who had lived through the events in that period in Turkey, there was a sense of 'unnaturalness' that needed explaining for.

Let us return to the 1925 speech, as it is a goldmine of information for us to uncover Mustafa Kemal's thinking at that stage. We notice that the only 'agent' he is referring to in this speech as carrying out that drastic change of course is 'the nation.' He does not speak of what he thought or acted upon, neither does he refer to his close circle, or the Republican People's Party as the elements responsible for this action, the subject of which is hidden behind the nebulous designation, 'the nation.' The 1920 speech is very different in this respect. It is a much more realistic description of the situation, acknowledging the existence (or at least the possibility of the emergence) of various actors. We also find Mustafa Kemal referring to himself or his camp as 'we,' which at that stage had not succeeded in turning its 'democratic demands,' to use Laclau's terminology in *On Populist Reason*, to popular demands.<sup>294</sup> Overall, the 1920 speech is much more democratic and pluralistic, whereas by 1925 the discourse has solidified to a large degree,

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<sup>294</sup> Laclau, E. (2005) *On Populist Reason*, London: Verso, pp. 72-83.

becoming authoritarian in the process. The antagonism towards the opposition, as I have discussed towards the end of Chapter Two, is in full display.

We also note that Mustafa Kemal is pointing at 'the contemporary civilisation' as the only answer to Turkey's problems. I have discussed this phrase with its two competing Turkish versions ('*muasır medeniyet*' and '*çağdaş uygarlık*') at length in Chapter Two, so I will simply be content here by noting that he establishes a relationship of binary opposition between 'contemporary civilisation' and its antonym, whose signifier, in the context of this chapter, would fittingly be Islam.

### *'Worldly' as Secular*

The following passage from this speech is one of the earliest expressions of secularism in Mustafa Kemal's own words, and it also shows his understanding of secularism:

'In summary, gentlemen, as a natural and necessary outcome of the changes and revolutions that I have enumerated, the nation has determined a *worldly* mentality of administration, for which the only inspiration is the *worldly* needs and for which change and evolution due to the change and the evolution of the needs is the principle, as its central tenet.'<sup>295</sup>

Here, by referring to 'change and evolution' as the central tenet, Mustafa Kemal was subscribing to the idea that Islamic Law was a dogmatic system and it was unable to provide answers to the 'changing and evolving' needs of the modern age. In other, later formulations of this idea, the Kemalists would disparagingly refer to the Islamic Law as 'desert law,' 'the medieval darkness,' or 'the 1400 years-old dogmas' (as opposed to the 'youthfulness and vitality of Kemalism').

Now, I would like now to engage in an analysis of what Mustafa Kemal had meant by 'worldly' in the above quotation and how it formed the basis of his understanding of secularism. Although this analysis is somewhat lengthy, the conclusion it will lead us to is important enough to justify its length. It is clear that by 'worldly,' he meant the secular, and he contrasted it with the religious. The Turkish word for 'worldly' that Mustafa Kemal used is *dünyevî*. The implied contrast here is best reflected in the Ottoman Turkish pairing '*dîn ü dünya*', that is, the religion and the world. As we shall see below, in his well-known sermon at a mosque in Balıkesir, it was used by Mustafa Kemal, too. This pairing was frequently used to refer to the two facets of life, forming a pair of contrasts but complementing each other as well at the same time. If the 'world' referred to the 'this world,' 'religion' looked towards 'the other world' or the afterlife, since the Qur'an

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<sup>295</sup> Karal, E.Z. (1981) *Atatürk'ten Düşünceler*, p. 44. Italics are mine.

referred to the Day of Judgment as ‘the Day of Religion.’<sup>296</sup> Another form this phrase took was ‘the religion and the state’ (*dîn ü devlet*).

In the Ottoman times, the preachers would make the prayer ‘May God protect the religion and the state’ in Arabic during Friday sermons. The wording of this prayer in Turkish is slightly different: ‘May God not cause the state and the nation any decline’ (*‘Allah devlete, millete zeval vermesin.’*) When we compare the Arabic prayer with the corresponding Turkish prayer, we may conclude that religion in the former corresponded to the nation in the latter. In other words, in this worldview, nation was defined through religion. For the common people, it was, and to a large extent still is, customary to recite this prayer when they greet state officials to their household or community, or when they receive some help or favours from the state.<sup>297</sup> I would like to emphasise that the concepts of both the state and the nation in this prayer are decidedly vague. Hence, ‘state’ here represents something deeper and more ancient than the Turkish Republic, and the prayer is more of a wish for order and peace in the world.<sup>298</sup>

I must underline that the connection word between the two elements of these phrases are ‘ü,’ not ‘ve,’ which is the usual Turkish word that corresponds to ‘and.’ The origin of the word ‘ve’ in Turkish is either Arabic or Persian, both of which has it, while the origin of the connection word ‘ü,’ sometimes spelled as ‘vü,’ comes from the ancient Persian language, known as *Pehlevi* (Pahlavi). Obviously, in Persian language, ‘ü’ must have evolved to ‘ve,’ however, especially in poetry, the more ancient form was preserved and in Ottoman Turkish, it was used in such couplings. Both the ancient and modern forms were spelled with a single Arabic letter, *vav*, however sometimes the word ‘ü’ was distinguished in a different spelling.<sup>299</sup>

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<sup>296</sup> Qur’an, 1:3: ‘[God] is the master of the Day of Religion.’

<sup>297</sup> At this point, it is worth remembering that the Turkish word for state, *devlet*, originally meant good luck or divine favour. The sixteenth century Ottoman sultan, Suleyman I’s famous couplet beautifully illustrates the etymology of the word: ‘There is nothing more prestigious than the state (*devlet*) among the people/But there is no better luck (*devlet*) than a breath of health.’

<sup>298</sup> This tendency to equate the existence of a state, actually any state, with order and peace can be traced back to the ‘Near Eastern tradition,’ which I have discussed in Chapter Two. Similar considerations were very influential in the Sunni Muslim view of politics and statehood in the classical Islamic age. Abdelwahab El-Affendi provides a concise discussion of this ‘classical Islamic secularism’ in his book *Who Needs an Islamic State?* El-Affendi, A. (2008) *Who Needs an Islamic State?*, Second Edition, London: Malaysia Think Tank, pp. 72-74.

<sup>299</sup> Once again I am indebted to Prof. Hasan Ünal for illuminating me on this fine point of Ottoman Turkish.

THE SOCIAL <sup>300</sup>	THE POLITICAL
<i>Din</i> (Religion)	<i>Dünya</i> (World)
<i>Din</i> (Religion)	<i>Devlet</i> (State)
<i>Millet</i> (Nation)	<i>Devlet</i> (State)

**Figure 5:** The three pairings of the Ottoman Turkish tradition.

The crucial question was how the relationship between the two sides of the pairing would be formulated.

Some other notable examples of this usage include ‘*ilm ü irfan*’ (scientific knowledge and wisdom), ‘*örf ü kanun*’ (custom and law), ‘*evlâd ü iyâl*’ (children and family), and ‘*Leyla vü Mecnun*’ (Laila and Mecnun, the heroine and the hero of the impossible love story). We see that in all these examples, the relationship between the two elements of the pairing is not an antagonistic one. Although the individual elements differ from each other in one crucial, defining perspective, they are not meant to be opposite poles, or enemies of each other. In the case of the two lovers, this can be most clearly seen! The two elements complement each other, and only when they come together do we have a whole.

In the discourse of the Ottoman Turkish tradition, then, the intermingling of the worldly affairs with religious affairs was seen as the natural order of the things. The Ottoman modernisation process, by and large, proceeded cautiously so as not to disturb this balance, but later on, the Kemalists would ridicule it as being overcautious and insufficient, and as lacking in necessary boldness to tackle the bull by its horns. The Kemalists, on the other hand, felt that there was no way to reform the ‘crumbling’ Ottoman Turkish social and political order. Hence, the only way for the reforms to proceed was to demolish everything related to the past and start anew.

The effects of this rather heedless attack on the relationship between the worldly and religious affairs, as symbolised in the phrase, ‘*din ü dünya*’ was a radical change, from that of complementariness to that of antagonism. However, things did not simply stop here. Since the secularist discourse of Kemalism mainly manifested itself as limits on the exercise of religious freedoms and as a general attack on Islam’s role in Turkish society, this created a rift between the

<sup>300</sup> I have to emphasize that I am using the terms ‘the social’ and ‘the political’ not in a sense of two mutually incompatible and competing sets of relations and discursive practices. I use the terms ‘the social’ and ‘the political’ in the sense that I have tried to explain in the Introduction. Briefly, I understand the political as the terrain of conflict and power struggle and the social as the domain of sedimented practices, whose origins had belonged to the political but overtime their original political character might have been forgotten. I am inspired to a large degree by Laclau’s discussion on the distinction between the two. Laclau, E. (1990) *New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time*, London: Verso, pp. 33-36. I have also benefited from Torfing, J. (1999) *New Theories of Discourse: Laclau, Mouffe and Zizek*, Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 69-71; Marchart, O. (2007) *Post-Foundational Political Thought: Political Difference in Nancy, Lefort, Badiou and Laclau*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, pp. 134-142.

state and the nation. Hence, the secularist disturbance of the pairing 'religion and the world' ('*din ü dünya*') resulted in an antagonism in the related pairing, 'the state and the nation' ('*devlet ü millet*'). Herein lies the crisis of Kemalism today, because the end result of its secularist policies was the alienation of the majority of the Turkish people and the estrangement of the Ottoman/Islamic tradition.

According to Mouffe, 'tradition allows us to think our own insertion into historicity, the fact that we are constructed as subjects through a series of already existing discourses, and that it is through this tradition which forms us that the world is given to us and all political action made possible.'<sup>301</sup> For Kemalism, the Ottoman Turkish tradition was a decayed, crumbling structure, which was not worth protecting, and which had to be completely destroyed for any progress to be made. The outcome of these attacks against tradition was Kemalism's inability to create a tradition of its own. With each successive suspension of the rule of law, with each military intervention, the political parties were banned. Hence, only in Turkey do we find a political party (Justice and Development Party), winning the general elections handsomely by a huge margin, with only 14 months after its establishment.<sup>302</sup>

Mouffe then quotes Michael Oakeshott's definition of politics, in relation to tradition: 'Politics is the activity of attending to the general arrangements of a collection of people who, in respect of their common recognition of a manner of attending to its arrangements, compose a single community. ... This activity, then, springs neither from instant desires, nor from general principles, but from the existing traditions of behaviour themselves. And the form it takes, because it can take no other, is the amendment of existing arrangements by exploring and pursuing what is intimated in them.'<sup>303</sup> The concept of politics as envisioned by Kemalism was far removed from that of Oakeshott.

Kemalism was first and foremost, the ideology of a small circle of elites, consisting of bureaucrats, soldiers and intellectuals to save the country and the people by raising up to (or, above!) the 'level of contemporary civilisation.' In this scheme, politics was a game only reserved for the Kemalist elite, but even for them, it mainly consisted of personal rivalries and internal power struggles. The Kemalist elites had neither the patience nor the intellectual maturity to tolerate criticism or opposition. 'People' existed as a rhetorical object, but they were thought to need the guidance and guardianship of the Kemalists. This would prompt the governor of Ankara in the

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<sup>301</sup> Mouffe, C. (1993) *The Return of the Political*, London: Verso, p. 16.

<sup>302</sup> In the 3 November 2002 general elections, the Justice and Development Party received 34% of the cast votes, while the Republican People Party's were below 20%. No other party could pass the required 10% threshold, hence only these two parties were represented in the parliament, with the aberrant result that the ruling party had 66% of the seats.

<sup>303</sup> Oakeshott, M. (1967) *Rationalism in Politics*, London: Methuen, p. 123; quoted in Mouffe, C (1993) *Return of the Political*, p. 16.



1940s, who had also been the chairman of the RPP in the province of Ankara, to tell the students 'If communism is to come to the country, we are the ones to bring it,' with the implication that it was not up to the students to think, or worry about whether communism, or any other political ideology, would be desirable for the country.

### **Mustafa Kemal Paşa at the Pulpit in a Mosque, Giving a Sermon**

Now, I would like to turn my attention to the famous sermon that Mustafa Kemal gave at a mosque in Balıkesir on February 1923. At first sight, it is quite unusual to hear a political leader, who would later on carry out a number of reforms in the name of secularism, at the pulpit of a temple (in this particular example, a mosque), addressing the people as a religious community. Yet, Mustafa Kemal's career is full of surprises, and when we read the text of his sermon, more surprises follow.

The first observation that can be made about the sermon is that it is completely in Turkish, as opposed to the sermons of the time, which were in Arabic. In this respect, the sermon is not like the sermons given in the mosques in Turkey today, since they are given in a mixture of Arabic and Turkish. The customary prayers at the beginning and at the end of the sermon, or in other words, the bare minimum that is needed to be said, are recited in Arabic, and a Turkish address is inserted in between. However, Mustafa Kemal begins his sermon with the praise of God (*hamdele*), followed by a blessing of the Prophet (*salvele*), which is the customary way of beginning a sermon (indeed, any other address or written text) in the Ottoman Turkish/Islamic tradition, but in his sermon, they are in Turkish, instead of the usual Arabic.

The creation of a 'Turkish Islam' as an ideal had been envisioned since the second constitutional period by some Young Turk and westernist authors, however, as a social engineering project, it was attempted in the early 1930s, especially during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan in 1932. The project was to a large degree inspired by the Protestant Reformation, and it aimed to create such a reformation in Islam.<sup>304</sup> However, this project would ultimately fail, since the Muslim congregations were never convinced of the sincerity of this secularist meddling with their religion and regarded it as an assault on Islam. The most significant symbol of this project was the forced conversion of the Muslim call to prayer (*ezan*) from Arabic to Turkish. One of the first acts of the Democrat Party government after the 1950 elections was to abolish the ban and allow people to perform the prayer calls in any way they wished. As we shall see below, Mustafa Kemal would

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<sup>304</sup> Cündioğlu, D. (1998) *Türkçe Kur'an ve Cumhuriyet İdeolojisi*, İstanbul: Kitabevi Yay.

also argue in this speech that the Friday sermons had to be given in Turkish. We see in this speech that this project had been in his mind as early as 1923.

The second point to note is his use of the term 'constitution' (*Kanun-ı Esasi*) in referring to the founding text of Islam, that is, the Qur'an:

'The constitution (*Kanun-ı Esasi*) of our religion, which was established in the auspices of our prophet, is known to all of us. It is the clear legal injunctions (*nusûs*) found in the Qur'an.'

This is quite remarkable, because the Islamic tradition did not make such an association. In Islamic jurisprudence, the Qur'an was the first and the foremost 'source,' followed by the Prophet's tradition (*sunnet*, or *sunnah*), the consensus of the Muslim *umma* (*icma*), and the jurisconsult's reasoning (*kıyas*), but Mustafa Kemal's identification of the Qur'an as the 'constitution' is a quite modern attitude, which has been one of the main arguments of the Islamists<sup>305</sup> from late nineteenth century onwards.<sup>306</sup> As El-Affendi summarises lucidly, the Islamists took the concept of the modern state, with all its authoritarian tendencies, at least with regard to the state's monopoly on the use of coercion, and made it as the basis of the Islamic state. Throughout Islamic history, the Qur'an was seen as the word of God, as the source of all knowledge in the world, as the primary source of jurisprudence, as a guide illuminating the lives of individuals, and as a prayer book, but identifying the holy book of Islam as the 'constitution' was decidedly a modern phenomenon. Mustafa Kemal would rightly be hitting a chord among the radical Islamist youth of the 1980s in Turkey with his words here. My argument is not that Mustafa Kemal had influenced the Islamists in Turkey, but that both the Islamists and the Kemalists had been heavily influenced by the hegemonic discourse of Orientalism.

Thirdly, Mustafa Kemal in this sermon refers to the perennial question 'Is Islam compatible with progress?' by categorically declaring that Islam, that is the unadulterated Islam, is perfectly compatible with 'intellect, logic, and truth.' This could be called as the 'scientific approach' to the problem of Islam, and again, since late nineteenth century, it has been very popular among the Islamists, the more so in the tradition of Cemaleddin Afgani, and his disciple, Muhammed Abduh,

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<sup>305</sup> Please refer to footnote 212, where I explain what I mean by Islamism.

<sup>306</sup> El-Affendi, A. (2008) *Who Needs an Islamic State?* Olivier Roy has the following perceptive insight on the relationship between the Islamists' concept of the Islamic state and the modern state: 'Suffice it to say that its definition, by Abul Ala Maududi, Khomeini, or the Muslim Brotherhood, is not drawn from sharia or the political traditions of the Muslim world but represents, in fact, an Islamic reading of modern political concepts (state, revolution, ideology, society), hence precisely a reflection on the autonomy and prevalence of the political sphere, using ideology as a mediating concept: the Islamic state is not only a state that recognises sharia as state law but one that makes religion a state ideology.' Roy, O. (2005) *Secularism Confronts Islam*, New York: Columbia University Press, p. 63. Also see Whine, M. (2001) "Islamism and Totalitarianism: Similarities and Differences," *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, Vol. 2, No. 2, pp. 54-72.

who were well known in Ottoman Turkey during the second constitutional period.<sup>307</sup> This approach is based on the observation that all laws of nature, studied and explored by science, exploited by technology, would have to be, from a religious point of view, the divine laws of God, at the same time. In the Qur'an, the laws of nature, from those that determined the orbits of the celestial bodies to those that regulated the weather conditions and climate, the water flows in the oceans, and the earthquakes, from the workings of even the smallest animals such as the bees or the ants to the laws about the rise and fall of human societies and civilisations were all referred to as the unchanging habits of God (*sünnetullah*). Hence, since both Islam and the natural laws were given to us by God Almighty, the logic concluded that there could not simply be any contradiction between the two, and we find Mustafa Kemal reiterating this position in his sermon. The desire to 'scientifically prove' the rationality of Islam and the divinity of the Qur'an is still very powerful in Turkey.

Fourthly, Mustafa Kemal mounted an attack against the traditional worship practices at mosques and the Friday sermons, but it was an attack whose significance far exceeded the narrow issue of the sermons, and corresponded to a general criticism against the Islamic tradition. What makes Mustafa Kemal's criticism all the more interesting is that his point of view in this sermon would be very much shared by most Islamists of the twentieth century. His description of the daily Muslim prayers as having become a purely mechanical affair, and having lost its original sincerity and meaning, is quite powerful, if a little bit lacking respect for religious sensibilities:

'Gentlemen! Mosques are not built to prostrate and stand up without looking at each other's faces. Besides prayer and worship, the mosques are built for thinking about [matters of] religion and the world (*din ü dünya*), that is, consultation (*meşveret*).'

In appearance, his words fit well with the Islamist Mehmed Akif's cry to people about the true purpose of the Qur'an, 'Know that the Qur'an was revealed neither to be read at cemeteries nor for astrology.' The Islamic institution of consultation (*meşveret*) had been frequently called up since Tanzimat to show that the principle of parliament was compatible with Islam. In 1868, Namık Kemal had published an article in the newspaper *Hürriyet* (Liberty) in London, arguing that the Qur'anic verse advising the Muslims to 'seek counsel' on determining policies and decisions was the basis of his political platform.<sup>308</sup>

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<sup>307</sup> Muhammad Abduh was also known in his attempts to bring 'scientific explanations' to a number of supernatural events that were recorded in the Qur'an as miracles of the past prophets.

<sup>308</sup> Namık Kemal (1868) "Ve şâvirhum fi'l-emr," *Hürriyet*, no.4, 20 July 1868, pp. 1-4. The English translation of Namık Kemal's article is published by Ş. Hanioglu, in Kurzman, C. (ed.) (2002) *Modernist Islam, 1840-1940: A Sourcebook*, New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 144-148.

A calligraphic inscription of the Qur'anic verse advising the believers to carry out their affairs through consultation<sup>309</sup> had been hanging on the wall of the Turkish Grand National Assembly in Ankara for a period before 1924. It was then replaced by another inscription which read 'Sovereignty belongs to the Nation.' This shift, from the Qur'anic verse to the principle of national sovereignty includes within itself the seeds of all the conflicts in republican Turkey and the interpretation of this shift sits at the very top of the crossroads of various discourses.

One cannot help but remember that when the same Qur'anic verse was carried in public meetings of Islamist groups from the 1970s onwards, it would be considered as a sign that the Islamists were preparing to topple the secular regime in Turkey and institute a theocratic state in its place.<sup>310</sup>

In similar fashion, one cannot help but remember the Islamist slogan 'Sovereignty belongs to God,' as opposed to 'Sovereignty belongs to the nation.' With respect to the Islamic world in general, El-Affendi regards the views of such 'Islamic writers' as Abu'l Ala Al-Maududi and Sayyid Qutb as having played an influential role in the spread of this antagonism. For El-Affendi, the declaration that sovereignty belonged to God and God only was nothing but a 'confusion,' which created 'the illusion that the conflicts taking place in Muslim polities are between God and some people, and not, as has always been the case, between different groups of people,...'<sup>311</sup> In Turkey, the most famous example of this idea appeared in Islamist poet Necip Fazıl Kısakürek's 'Address to the Youth,' which was clearly a response to Mustafa Kemal's famous address with the same title, where he dreamed of a 'parliament, on whose walls the declaration "Sovereignty belongs to the Righteous [God]" is written.'

Hence, the question was not an abstract discussion on the source of sovereignty and legitimation, but a debate on political representation. The former was a shroud under which the real political struggle was hidden. In the Turkish case, as long as the principle of 'national sovereignty' referred to 'popular sovereignty,' and the idea that the majority of the electorate's vote should govern the

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<sup>309</sup> Qur'an 42:38: 'And they [the believers] carry out their affairs through consultation.'

<sup>310</sup> Ironically, *Hürriyet*, the leading Turkish daily, was ignorant enough to assume that a placard which read 'And they carry out their affairs through consultation Shura:38,' where Shura was the name by which Chapter 42 of the Qur'an was known, referred not to a Qur'anic verse, but the article 38 of some pan-Islamist conference, named Shura! The secularisation policies of the Kemalist regime has rendered generations of educated Turks so alienated from their native culture that the journalists were not even aware of the basic naming conventions of the Islamic literature. An analogy would be a journalist assuming a placard with 'John 3:19' to refer to the work of a Christian fundamentalist named John, instead of Chapter 3, Verse 19 of the Gospel of John!

<sup>311</sup> El-Affendi, A. (2000) "Rationality of Politics and Politics of Rationality: Democratisation and the Influence of Islamic Religious Traditions," in Tamimi, A. and J. Esposito (eds.) *Islam and Secularism in the Middle East*, London: C. Hurst&Co Publishers, p. 166.

country, there was widespread support for it. But, when this principle was used by the Kemalists to attack the Ottoman Turkish/Islamic heritage, and to strengthen their position as the guardians of the populace, there was no way people would consent to that.

Regarding the 'national sovereignty,' I have referred to the difficulties surrounding the definition of a Turkish nation and Turkishness without reference to Islam at several points throughout the text. Aside from this, however, the declaration that 'Sovereignty belongs to the Nation' has another problem in that it does not answer the question, 'Who shall exercise sovereignty in the name of the nation?'

During the national liberation war, the parliament was seen as the locus of the national sovereignty, and this idea, at least in principle, was kept until the 1960 coup d'état. Afterwards, the idea of 'shared sovereignty,' which dictated that the nation would exercise its sovereignty through the constitutional state institutions, was inscribed in the 1961 constitution. This was in effect a triumph on behalf of the Kemalist bureaucratic elite in their attempt to control the rising democratic demands from all corners of Turkey. The 1982 constitution was an even further setback from this perspective. Let us read article 6 of the 1982 constitution on national sovereignty:

'Sovereignty is vested fully and unconditionally in the nation. The Turkish Nation shall exercise its sovereignty through the authorised organs as prescribed by the principles laid down in the Constitution. The right to exercise sovereignty shall not be delegated to any individual, group or class. No person or agency shall exercise any state authority which does not emanate from the Constitution.'<sup>312</sup>

This translation is not correct in one little but crucial point. When we read the Turkish original, we see that 'the authorised organs' in the second sentence must actually be '*its* authorised organs.' The difference is far from trivial, for it sheds light on the bureaucratic mindset of the constitution's framers. The logic of the text is revealed when we ask the question, 'Through whose authorised organs shall the nation exercise its sovereignty?' A grammatical reading would give the answer as 'the nation's,' but it does not make sense, because the organs in question in fact are the organs of the state, as explained in the final sentence of the article.

The Kemalist idea of the unity and indivisibility of the party (the Republican People Party), the state (founded by Atatürk), the 'eternal leader' (Mustafa Kemal Atatürk), and the nation (as defined through the Kemalist principles) of the 1930s is reflected here as the inability of the

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<sup>312</sup> The official translation taken from the website of the Turkish Constitutional Court. [http://www.anayasa.gov.tr/images/loaded/pdf\\_dosyalari/THE\\_CONSTITUTION\\_OF\\_THE\\_REPUBLIC\\_OF\\_TURKEY.pdf](http://www.anayasa.gov.tr/images/loaded/pdf_dosyalari/THE_CONSTITUTION_OF_THE_REPUBLIC_OF_TURKEY.pdf) (Accessed 1 February 2009).

authors of the 1982 constitution to distinguish between the nation and the state. Evidently, for them, the idea of constitution as a charter establishing the state for the benefit of its citizens, delineating the limits of state authority and protecting the individual rights is foreign. The constitution, then, becomes an expression of the Kemalist bureaucratic elite's guardianship over the people. In this light, although the first sentence of the article declares that the nation's sovereignty does not accept any conditions or restrictions, the rest of the article goes on to place the ultimate limit of that sovereignty.

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I would like to return to Mustafa Kemal's sermon again. In the last excerpt above, he was chastising the contemporary Muslims with turning the prayers into empty rituals and the mosques into lifeless places. He then mounts an offensive against the dysfunctional state of the Friday sermons. He explains that sermon (*hutbe*) simply means 'addressing people.' He looks back at Islamic history and recognises that when 'the Exalted Prophet' and 'the Rightly Guided Caliphs' that followed him gave sermons, they talked about 'the military, administrative, financial, political, social issues of the day.'<sup>313</sup> Far from being dull, their sermons were bursting with ideas and energy. Their sermons were designed to shake the nascent Islamic community, and they mostly succeeded in creating a meaningful change in the lives of the people and in the policies of the emerging polity.

In the terminology of discourse theory, these sermons would be perfect examples of articulations, that is, resulting in changes in subject-positions.<sup>314</sup> Mustafa Kemal attributes an *organic* function to the sermons in particular, and to the function of religion in society in general, and in this, he would be joined by any Islamist of the republican period. Nevertheless, in his emphasis on the purpose and the meaning of religious rituals and ceremonies, and in the importance he attaches to the *content* of the sermons over style, we could say that he was influenced considerably by the Protestantism.<sup>315</sup>

It is of course very fitting that Mustafa Kemal gives the Prophet and the Rightly Guided Caliphs as example, because he is the one giving the sermon now at the pulpit! The Prophet and the first caliphs after him were not only the spiritual (or, religious) leaders of the Muslim community, they were political leaders at the same time. By referring to their example, Mustafa Kemal justifies his appearance at the pulpit, giving a sermon. He has also established that their sermons were not

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<sup>313</sup> Compare this attitude which sees discussion of political matters in the mosques, with one of the most heated charges of Kemalists against the right wing and Islamist parties that 'they are using religion as an instrument for political aims.'

<sup>314</sup> Laclau, E. and C. Mouffe (1985) *Hegemony and Social Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*, London: Verso, p. 105.

<sup>315</sup> Cündioğlu, D. (1998) *Türkçe Kur'an ve Cumhuriyet İdeolojisi*, p. 90.

restricted to the religious affairs, but spanned the 'secular' affairs as well. It is intriguing to think of Mustafa Kemal's later speeches, especially his Great Speech (*Nutuk*) of 1927, as sermons in these schematics. Although his approach in 1923 appears to be holistic, things would dramatically change from 1924 onwards with the abolition of the caliphate and the establishment of the *Diyanet*. As the Kemalist reforms in the name of secularism progressed, religion was forced to a corner and relegated to a minor role in society.

Next, Mustafa Kemal takes the opportunity to attack the Ottoman sultans and portrays them as 'Oriental despots.'<sup>316</sup> He claims that the sultans were able to deceive the people, because the sermons were in a language that people did not understand:

'In order for this style to continue, a single condition had to be met, that is, the chief of the nation must tell the people the truth, must listen to them and must not deceive them! ... But they kept the things belonging to the nation, secret from the nation. The reason that sermons were given in a language that the people could not understand and that they did not touch upon the necessities and needs of to-day, was to force the people to go behind the tyrants (*müstebit*) carrying the names of caliph or sultan, like slaves. ... Henceforth, the sermons must be completely Turkish and suited to the necessities of the modern times, and they will be.'

This is a remarkable illustration to the argument that I have made in the introduction section of this chapter that 'Islam represents not just the religion but the whole Ottoman Turkish tradition, culture and way of life, or simply, everything that the Kemalists thought that that was wrong with Turkey, everything that had caused Turkey to stay behind in the "relentless race towards progress and enlightenment among the nations of the world" .' For Mustafa Kemal, the Ottoman sultans were 'Oriental despots' and they deceived people for centuries with Islam. Hence, just as the tyranny of the Ottoman monarchy was toppled by Kemalism, its social foundations including religion had to be cleared.

My arguments in this rather lengthy analysis of Mustafa Kemal's sermon in 1923 can be summarised under five headings. Firstly, I have referred to the 'Turkish Islam' project of the Kemalists as a top-down social engineering project to create a reformed Islam that was removed from tradition. Secondly, I have shown some common points in Mustafa Kemal's discourse vis-à-vis the Islamists and the religious conservatives, regarding the compatibility of Islam with science and 'Islamic state' as a modern, centralised, authoritarian state. Thirdly, I have argued that debates on 'national sovereignty' revolved around the question of representation and the Kemalist elite's guardianship over the people. Fourthly, I have discussed Mustafa Kemal's ideas on

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<sup>316</sup> I have discussed the Orientalist discourse, which portrayed Ottoman sultans as 'Oriental Despot's in Chapter One, and argued in Chapter Two that regarding Abdulhamid II, the Kemalists have been largely unsuccessful in contemporary Turkey in their attempt to portray him as such.

the position and the role of Islam in society. Although in this sermon he attributed an 'organic' place to religion and envisioned it as an integral part of the political, the later secularist policies would attempt to castrate religion's role in society and make it irrelevant. Finally, I have argued that Mustafa Kemal viewed religion, that is, religion as it had been understood and practiced in the Ottoman Turkish tradition, as an element of suppression in the hands of the 'tyrannous and despotic Ottoman sultans.'

### **The Contested Meanings of Secularism in the Political Discourses in Turkey**

Since the 1920s, one of the most heavily discussed questions related to secularism in Turkey has been the question 'Is secularism irreligion?' The question frequently arises because the terms used in Turkish to correspond to the concept of secularism, namely, *laiklik* (or *layiklik* in the early texts from the period 1928-1960) and *sekülerizm*, are not intelligible to the general Turkish public, and hence their meaning should be constantly redefined and renegotiated at the beginning of each and every discussion.<sup>317</sup>

#### *The Vocabulary of Politics in Turkey*

The issue of the terminology of politics in Turkey is important enough to justify a digression. In order for a political system to work effectively, there needs to be at least a general consensus on the meanings, frameworks, and limits of key political concepts, such as democracy, republic, parliament, sovereignty, civil society, political parties, or opposition, and unfortunately Kemalism did a great disservice to the country by attacking, dismantling, and sidestepping the existing vocabulary, but failing to come up with an adequate new one.

How can the political debate move forward in Turkey, when oppressive measures that are clearly in violation of the freedom of speech are defended in the name of secularism? And just what is meant by secularism, which is referred to as one of the main characteristics of the republic, yet there are fundamental disagreements on its definition. When Bülent Arınç, who was one of the founding figures of the Justice and Development Party and who served as the president of the parliament after the 2002 elections, called for a clarification of the definition of secularism, his intent had been precisely this point, however, his call was quickly dismissed in the Kemalist circles as an attempt to dismantle secularism altogether.

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<sup>317</sup> Kılıçbay, M.A. (1994) "Laiklik ya da Bu Dünyayı Yaşayabilmek," *Cogito*, no. 1, p. 15.



Interestingly, despite many years of harsh reforms on the Turkish language, the number of 'pure Turkish' terms in the political vocabulary is very low while the majority of the terms in circulation are still from 'old Turkish' with Arabic origin. 'Election' (*seçim* has replaced *intihabat*), 'minister' (*bakan* has replaced *nazır* or *vekil*), 'vote' (*oy* has largely replaced *rey*) may well be the only major terms where the language reform was successful in replacing the old Ottoman Turkish words. Today, some other attempts of the language reform, such as 'member of parliament' (*saylav*), simply sound funny. Yet, the language reform completely failed to get rid of the 'foreign' words in the following examples: republic (*cumhuriyet*), 'government' (*hükümet*), 'power' (*iktidar*), 'opposition' (*muhalefet*), 'member of parliament' (*milletvekili*), 'parliament' (*meclis*, or infrequently *parlamento*), 'people' (*halk*), 'right' (*hak*), 'justice' (*adalet*), 'legitimacy' (*meşruiyet*). The list goes on and on.

In the case of the following words, a dual situation exists, where both the 'old Turkish' and newly invented or resurrected 'pure Turkish' words coexist uneasily: 'citizen' (*vatandaş*, from Arabic origin *vatan* vs *yurttaş*, of 'pure Turkish' *yurt*), 'motherland' (*vatan* vs *yurt*), 'sovereignty' (*hakimiyet* vs *egemenlik*), 'nation' (*millet* vs less frequent *ulus*), 'nationalism' (*milliyetçilik* vs increasingly frequent *ulusalcılık*, but with a divergent meaning), 'freedom' or 'liberty' (*hürriyet* vs *özgürlük*), 'independence' (*istiklal* vs *bağımsızlık*). It is worth noting that all 'old Turkish' words given up to now are of Arabic origin.

Regarding the term for 'politics' itself, there are two words, one 'old Turkish' with Arabic origin (*siyaset*) and the other loaned from the western languages (*politika*). The language reform was not successful to change the name of the game, either!

But, the following observation is even more important and crucial: there are a number of terms, for which no 'old Turkish' or 'pure Turkish' counterparts can be found. The terms had to be imported directly from the west: 'Democracy' (*demokrasi*), 'secularism' or 'laicism' (*sekülerizm* or *laiklik*), 'party' (*parti*), 'liberalism' (*liberalizm*), 'civil' (*sivil*).<sup>318</sup> The problem with these imports is that they do not correspond to the realities of the Turkish political scene. In other words, there is considerable confusion and ambiguity, even deep disagreements, among the higher echelons of the intelligentsia and the Kemalist bureaucratic elite about what these terms mean, or should mean. Clearly, these concepts have not been sufficiently internalised. And Kemalism stands as a barrier towards a democratic, pluralistic, or liberal interpretations of these concepts.

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<sup>318</sup> Interestingly the programme of the Progressive Republican Party in 1924, set in Arabic script, explained the party's main orientation with two terms, 'liberalism' and 'democracy,' which were explicitly written in Latin script and in French spelling. The Turkish translations offered for these terms were quite original: 'love of freedom' for liberalism (*hürriyetperverlik*) and 'popular sovereignty' (democracy)! Nişanyan, S. (2008) *Yanlış Cumhuriyet*, pp. 82-89; Ahmad, F. (1993) *The Making of Modern Turkey*, p. 57; Zürcher, E.J. (1997) *Turkey: A Modern History*, London: IB Tauris, pp. 175-176.

On the one hand, there are calls to define secularism clearly, because there is no agreement on the existing definitions. On the other hand, the secularist policies in Turkey cannot be considered as secular by western standards. On the one hand, democracy has not been internalised in the vocabulary of Turkish politics. On the other hand, since the first free multiparty elections, Turkish democracy suffered four major and countless minor interventions by the military. On the one hand, liberalism is narrowly understood as a purely economic ideology that only results in wild capitalism and no market regulation. On the other hand, the current constitution, prepared after the 1980 coup d'état and already undergone 15 major amendments, is still a document that privileges the state over the individuals. On the one hand, the dominant meaning of the term 'civil' for Turkish people is 'not military.' On the other hand, the suzerainty of the military, in the name of Kemalism, over Turkish politics still continues. Clearly, this is not a coincidence.

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In the early discussions, there was an attempt to translate the concept of secularism into Turkish with the Arabic origin word '*lâ-dînî*,' which literally meant 'non-religious,' or 'irreligious.' John Keane, in his article "Secularism?" discusses the secularism debates in the Islamic world and refers to the difficulty of translating the term 'secularise' in the following passage, where several strands of topics being pursued throughout this chapter come together at a critical juncture: '[B]ecause its literal translation, *la diniyah* (non-religious) would have been rejected outright by Muslims, for whom (according to the principle *al-Islam din wa-dawlah*) the division between the temporal and the spiritual is literally unthinkable.'

<sup>319</sup>

In the Turkish context of the debate, the secularists hoped that the term *lâ-dînî* would simply be understood as referring to the elimination of religion's influence on the worldly affairs but then, it could also refer to the irreligiosity of the individuals. However, things did not develop as planned, and the latter became the dominant meaning people attributed to the term *lâ-dînî*, and then by the chain of deduction, to the –admittedly foreign– concept of secularism or laicism. This was very dangerous from the Kemalist perspective, because it implied a direct confrontation with Islam. For Olivier Roy, '[Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's] secularism was very militant and would have been openly antireligious had the influence of Islam in his country not compelled him to be more cautious.'

<sup>320</sup> In order to avoid this danger, the slogan 'Secularism is not irreligion!' has become one of the most repeated statements of the Kemalist secularists, but whether their efforts have been successful in erasing that negative association is entirely up to debate.

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<sup>319</sup> Keane, J. (2000) "Secularism?" p. 15.

<sup>320</sup> Roy, O. (2005) *Secularism Confronts Islam*, pp. 27-28.

## Irreligion or Separation of Worldly and Religious Matters? Trying to Give a Meaning to Secularism

I would like now to direct my attention to the memoirs of Ahmed Hamdi (Başar), who served as an economics advisor to Mustafa Kemal for some time. His testimony offers invaluable insights to the debates that were taking place in Mustafa Kemal's entourage regarding secularism in the immediate aftermath of the closing of the Free Republican Party. As it is well known, it was Mustafa Kemal's custom to discuss issues with his entourage at dinner table, with sessions often running late into night. Ahmed Hamdi's narrative of one particular night when the meaning of secularism as put on debate is particularly interesting:

'[In 1930] Mr. Şükrü Kaya began enlightening us on the topic of secularism, by Gazi's (Mustafa Kemal Paşa) request. He said "Secularism, which is a child of the French Revolution, is an idea of the civilised world today as well." A question was put forward [for discussion]: Is secularism irreligion? Or is it simply about religion not interfering with the worldly matters? A consensus was reached on the second alternative.'<sup>321</sup>

According to Ahmed Hamdi, Mustafa Kemal then asked his opinion. He evidently regarded the consensus on the table as suitable for the Christian west. For him, it would not be a good idea to apply this understanding of secularism, which was better suited to Christianity, to Turkey, where the majority of the population was Muslim. In what follows, we see how perceptive Ahmed Hamdi is, since the differences between Christianity and Islam, and between the West and Turkey, that he so skilfully outlines would form the basis of every discussion on secularism afterwards:

'The non-interference of religion with the worldly matters can be only considered for Christianity, because Christianity is precisely such a religion, that is, it does not interfere with the worldly matters. ... Hence, just like it had been during the foundation of Christianity, the worldly matters were saved from the influence of religion [during the establishment of secularism in Europe] through a division of labour that gave "Caesar's right to Caesar, and the Pope's right to the Pope".'

He then notes that secularism did not cause irreligion in Europe. He rightly observes that in Europe and America, people *can be* secular *and* religious *at the same time*. How about Islam? For Ahmed Hamdi, the difference is substantial to warrant reconsidering the consensus, reached that night, that an idea of secularism that simply means no interference and interaction between religion and worldly affairs:

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<sup>321</sup> Başar, A.H. (2007) *Ahmed Hamdi Başar'ın Hatıraları*, M. Koraltürk (ed.), Vol. 1, İstanbul: Bilgi Üniversitesi Yay., pp. 307-311.

‘On the other hand, there is no separation of religion and world (*din ü dünya*) in Islam, which was born after Christianity and which is in fact an advanced religion. To state it better, Islam takes [this] world as the principal [as opposed to the afterlife]; it is based on reason; it accepts popular rule and the principle that legal norms change in time; it wants to consider everything rationally and it wants to prevent any dogma. [However,] the original principles that existed during the foundation of Islam have been corrupted. A separate religious class has been setup, and the hegemony of this class and the institutions it established has damaged society. Today [true] religion has disappeared.’<sup>322</sup>

The crucial difference between Christianity and Islam, then, is that Christianity from its inception was based on the idea of a separation between the religious and worldly spheres, whereas the situation for Islam was completely the opposite. Ahmed Hamdi’s identification of Islam as a religion recognising the need for the legal norms to change *in time* is remarkable. Firstly, this is in contrast with Mustafa Kemal’s identification of Islamic Law as an ‘unchanging’ or dogmatic legal system, which I have discussed above. In fact, this was the point of view of not only Mustafa Kemal, but the whole strain of Kemalist secularism that was hostile to Islam. But as we see, in Ahmed Hamdi’s formulation, the contradiction was overcome by positing an essential difference between ‘true Islam’ and ‘corrupted Islam’ or the traditional Islam of the day. Secondly, the relationship between secularism and the concept of ‘changing time’ or temporality was the heart of the issue, because this also linked secularism to modernity, which I have discussed above.

We also come across the distinction between ‘true Islam’ and ‘contemporary Islam’ in Ahmed Hamdi’s presentation, which was found in the speeches of Mustafa Kemal, too, as well as in the discourse of the Islamists from late nineteenth century onwards. Likewise, we see the reflection of the ‘scientific approach’ that we have seen above in Mustafa Kemal’s speeches and in the Islamist discourse. So what was Ahmed Hamdi’s proposal?

‘According to us, the meaning we should derive from secularism is not a separation of religion and world, but to prevent the hegemonic control of the worldly matters by religion, which appears under the guise of dogmatic principles at the hands of a separate religious class. Whatever we do in the name of secularism, we can do as Muslims. But if we say that we are going to separate religion and world, we would distance ourselves from Muslimhood and we would be committing irreligion. Christianity can live by distancing itself from worldly matters, Islam cannot.’

This may well be the first expression of the idea that it is *necessary* to control Islam for secularism to take hold in Turkey. Nevertheless, besides this cynical interpretation that is somewhat hostile to religion, it is possible to look at this view as the attitude of a sincere Muslim, who wants to

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<sup>322</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 307-311.

prevent the rise of a discourse that is openly hostile to religion. I argue that these two competing and somewhat contradictory attitudes towards religion has determined the Kemalist attitude towards Islam ever since.

At this point, a person at the dinner table, representing the cynical attitude opposed Ahmed Hamdi's views by stating that 'What Mr. Hamdi is saying almost amounts to creating a new religion or he is proposing reform in Islam. The aim of our revolution is wholly out of this. Islam is a religion that has lived its day, it is a religion that has ended its life. ...' These views would pretty much shape the policies of the single party regime in the 1930s and 1940s. But, it would be a premature conclusion to assume that Kemalist secularism was simply a hostile attack against Islam. When Mustafa Kemal saw the confrontation slowly building up between the two opposing ideas, he cut the debate that night. We find more details of Ahmed Hamdi's views when he narrates his dialogue with Reşit Galib sometime later while travelling from Sivas to Tokat. For Ahmed Hamdi, religion does not have to be the enemy of the Kemalist reforms. He acknowledges the importance of religion in the Turkish society, and sees it as an opportunity to reach out to the people.

'The greatest sentiment that ties the Turkish society of today is religion. The Turkish nation has lived for centuries as a religious nation. It regarded people who had converted to Islam as brothers and as members of the nation. ... The people are uneducated. However, it is possible to address all these ignorant people through religion and by the voice of religion. They congregate at the mosques every Friday, at every religious festival. They always believe in the voice and words of the religion. If we want to move them en masse, we could advance religion. ... Now, getting rid of religion completely because it fell under the bigots and it destroyed society is similar to getting rid of automobiles because ignorant drivers are killing pedestrians.'

Finally, for Ahmed Hamdi, it is a futile attempt to try the application of a secularism based on the separation of religion and the world, because it would be perceived as irreligion by the masses.

'The application of secularism in the understanding that has been taking root recently is nothing but irreligion. In Islam, the separation of religion and the world is an expression of irreligion. ... We cannot reach our aims by bulldosing and abandoning the mosques and replacing them with Peoples' Houses. It is always possible to make our voice heard to the people congregating at the mosques, to transform them into modern peoples' houses, to get rid of the religious class, and to make everyone speak in the name of religion and the world. In this respect, Islam is the most modern, most advanced religion.'<sup>323</sup>

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<sup>323</sup> Başar, A.H. (1945) *Atatürk'le Üç Ay ve 1930'dan Sonra Türkiye*, İstanbul, pp. 48-53.

His warning that ‘bulldozing the mosques and replacing them with Peoples’ Houses’ would backfire is all the more appropriate, as I shall discuss the destruction policies of the 1930s and 1940s against religious buildings below. If this hostile attitude had been the main characteristic of Kemalist secularism until the end of World War I, the conciliatory attitude championed by Ahmed Hamdi would give its colour to the policies afterwards.

### **Secularising Islam: Establishment of the *Diyanet***

3 March 1924 was a fateful day in the history of the Turkish Republic, because so many radical decisions were taken that day. However, most of those decisions are usually left in the shadow of that big decision to abolish the caliphate, whose effects would be felt throughout the Islamic world.<sup>324</sup> However, there were some other decisions taken that day, whose effects are still being felt in Turkey. Among those, the abolition of the Ministry of Sharia and Private Trusts (*Evkaf*) and the establishment of the *Diyanet* to take over some of the functions of that ministry are significant and an analysis of this change will help us decode the development of Kemalism’s secularist discourse. The official name of the *Diyanet* is often translated into English as ‘Directorate of Religious Affairs’ (*Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı*), however, we shall see that this translation is seriously misleading.<sup>325</sup> Studying the terms of this title will help us uncover the hidden codes of the Kemalist secularism.

Let us begin by considering the term *Diyanet*. It is translated into English as ‘religious’ but that translation loses the all important distinction between *din* and *diyanet*, which is crucial in Islam. The choice of the word was deliberate from the beginning, and in the discussions in the parliament on 3 March 1924, several members of the parliament highlighted it. Samih Rifat, Balıkesir MP, explained that the term *din* included all aspects of religion, including those requiring the judges’ decisions, whereas the term *diyanet* excluded those aspects and only included aspects related to ‘worship, beliefs, and the jurisconsults’ opinions (*fetva*),’ which were not legally binding. He continued:

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<sup>324</sup> El-Affendi, A. (2008) *Who Needs an Islamic State?*

<sup>325</sup> There are numerous works in English where this translation is used, but among the works that are relevant to my study, the following may be listed: Zürcher, E.J. (1997) *Turkey: A Modern History*, pp. 187, 233, 243; Ahmad, F. (1993) *The Making of Modern Turkey*, p. 220; Parla, T. and A. Davison (2004) *Corporatist Ideology in Kemalist Turkey: Progress or Order?*, Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, pp. 51, 57-58, 107-108, 111. Perhaps the best translation of *Diyanet* is proposed by Andrew Davison as ‘Directorate of Piety Affairs.’

'In the word *din*, which includes meanings of rulership (*imaret*) and government, the concepts of economics, sociology, policing, and education are all included. All of these are divided into the departments of the government. Of these, only rules related to the worship, belief, and opinions of the jurisconsults [which were not legally binding] remain and they belong to the Presidency of the *Diyanet* Affairs and the word *diyanet* is completely appropriate for this meaning.'<sup>326</sup>

For Samih Rifat, Islam was a religion which went beyond simply prescribing a set of moral framework, specifying certain rituals and worship, and forming a belief system. For him, Islam was a religion that also included judicial aspects, with relation to all aspects of social life, which formed the body of the Islamic jurisprudence. He then rejected that aspect of Islam, because, for him those were the duties of the parliament and the government. Although he uses neither the term secularism nor laicism, this contrast that he draws between the worldly affairs and religious affairs is what makes his attitude secular.

The first article of the law establishing the *Diyanet*, accepted that day, reflected the separation of the religious and worldly affairs, and the restriction of religion's role in society:

'In the Republic of Turkey, the legislation and the execution of the regulations related to the dealings of the people belong the Turkish Grand National Assembly and the government that this assembly forms, and, the Presidency of *Diyanet* Affairs (*Diyanet İşleri Reisliği*) has been established for the administration of all regulations and affairs of the clear religion of Islam, related to the beliefs and worship, and *excepting those* [belonging to the assembly and the government].'<sup>327</sup>

During the single party years, *Diyanet* was a tiny organisation, its existence barely tolerated within the government hierarchy. However, from the 1960s onwards, with the rising demands of the people for more religious services and with rapid urbanisation, the size of the *Diyanet* rapidly increased. Today, there are about 80 thousand mosques throughout the country, all under the *Diyanet* organisation. The number of imams, preachers and other personnel working as public servants under *Diyanet* approaches 100 thousand. Its annual budget is over 300 million USD.

It must be pointed out however that the huge size of the *Diyanet* today is not simply the result of the regime's desire to control religion. Another factor in play is the huge demand from the public for mosques and religious services. The great majority of the mosques built since 1950 has been built by private endowments, without recourse to public funds. At the squatter-house (*gecekondu*) neighbourhoods that pop up around the outskirts of metropolitan centres, one of the first social buildings to be erected by local communities is the mosque. I must make it clear

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<sup>326</sup> Kara, İ. (2008) *Cumhuriyet Türkiye'sinde Bir Mesele Olarak İslam*, p. 63.

<sup>327</sup> *Ibid*, p. 64. Italics are mine.

that it is illegal in Turkey for a mosque to operate without official permission and without officially appointed imams. Hence, once the local community finished construction of their mosque, they would apply to the *Diyanet* for permission to perform communal prayers and ask for the appointment of an imam. From the regime's perspective, if an official imam was not appointed to this mosque, there was a 'real danger' that the congregation might seek a 'freelance' imam, who might disseminate ideas against secularism and Kemalism. Therefore, appointing an imam to a newly built mosque, thereby increasing the size of the *Diyanet*, was not only desirable but also necessary, and even mandatory. Looked under this light, it is more appropriate to view *Diyanet* as a ground for hegemonic struggle, on the one hand by the inward pulling secularist Kemalist discourse of the regime, and on the other, by the outward pushing democratic and populist demands of the people.

### *The Military and the Diyanet: Two Special Cases in the Turkish State Hierarchy*

On 3 March 1924, the same day that the caliphate was abolished and the *Diyanet* was established, the status of the General Staff of the Turkish Armed Forces was changed from being a ministry to being a Presidency, like the *Diyanet*. Again, just like the *Diyanet*, the President of the General Staff, who was the highest ranking commander in the Turkish Armed Forces, was directly attached to the prime minister. These two ministries were taken out of the cabinet and attached directly to the prime minister, because it was decided that the military and the religious establishment had to stay out of politics.

There is a peculiar relationship between the military and the *Diyanet*, and it is also reflected in the titles of the heads of the two organisations. Normally, in the Turkish administrative practice, one would expect them to be called as 'directorates' or 'general administratorions' (*genel müdürlük*), as the organisations below ministry level are called. However, the military and the *Diyanet* are unique in the hierarchy of the executive branch in having their heads called as presidents (*reis* or *başkan*, literally meaning 'head'). Beyond a reflection of their special status, this signifies the autonomy of these institutions.<sup>328</sup> A 'director' or 'general administrator' is either under a minister or the prime minister. He or she is still 'someone who receives orders' (*memur*) and executes those orders.<sup>329</sup> As the recent debates about the status of the President of the General Staff has shown, the law does not state that he is 'under the authority' of the prime minister, but simply that he 'is responsible to the prime minister.'

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<sup>328</sup> As far as I could determine, the columnist Dücane Cündioğlu has been the first person to underline this point. Cündioğlu, D. (2007) "Kıymetli Teferruat," *Yeni Şafak*, 16 September 2007.

<sup>329</sup> I have discussed the significance of the term '*memur*' in Chapter Two. For further details, please refer to that discussion.



It is interesting to note that the special relationship between the *Diyanet* and the military intensified during the military coup periods. After the 1960 coup, Sadettin Evrin, who was a retired army general and who also belonged to a Sufi order, was appointed as the vice chief to *Diyanet*. In this period, a new translation of the Qur'an was commissioned by the generals, which was prepared in 8 months by two young scholars. They were then sent to Israel to learn Hebrew.<sup>330</sup> One of those scholars, Hüseyin Atay, would play an important role in the decision to make religious classes (2 hours weekly) mandatory for all students after the 1980 coup. He is also said to have helped the head of the coup, General Kenan Evren to draft his speeches, which contained a lot of quotations from the Qur'anic verses and Prophetic traditions. In an interview that he conducted with the third president of Turkey, Celal Bayar, Hüseyin Atay would declare his intentions to be 'to fuse Atatürk with the Turkish Nation.'

#### *The Diyanet as the State's Tool against the Islamic Groups*

Throughout its history, the *Diyanet* has had an uneasy relationship with Islamic groups. On the one hand, from the 1960s onwards, it had to expand its personnel rapidly, in parallel with the exploding demand for religious services from the people. It would be impossible to achieve this by excluding all people with ties to various Islamic groups. Hence, we see *Diyanet* accommodating the members of these groups in its ranks. But at the same time, since it was a state institution, the *Diyanet* was used by the authorities, and frequently forced to engage in campaigns against certain Islamic groups. These efforts especially intensified in the aftermath of the military coups.

In 1964, Sadettin Evrin, the retired army general that had been appointed as the vice chief of *Diyanet*, prepared a polemical work against the *Nurcu* group, which followed Bediüzzaman Said Nursi. Evrin pressured the *Diyanet's* chief, Hasan Hüsnü Erden, to publish this short treatise under his name. When Erden refused, he was forced to retire from his post.<sup>331</sup> In the same period, some provincial governors attempted to preach to congregations on Fridays, no doubt inspired by Mustafa Kemal's sermon. Likewise, preachers were forced to give sermons praising the military coup.

#### *The Diyanet and the Superstitions: The Orientalist Hegemony in Operation*

In Chapter One, one of the issues I investigated in relation to Orientalism's influence on the Ottomans/Turks was the issue of superstition. The Orientalist view regarded the Turks as being a

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<sup>330</sup> Cündioğlu, D. (2007) "Kıymetli Teferruat."

<sup>331</sup> Kara, İ. (2008) *Cumhuriyet Türkiye'sinde Bir Mesele Olarak İslam*, p.85.

deeply superstitious people. This was to be contrasted with the scientific outlook that was dominant in the west. In Chapter One, I first defined Kemalism as ‘the general signifier of the idea that Turkey must adopt the western European political system, values, and lifestyle without any exception, since Western Europe signifies the “level of modern civilisation,” and its version of modernity has universal applicability.’ Then, I showed how Kemalism was influenced by the Orientalist discourse. Within the context of superstitions, I pointed out the parallels between the Orientalist and Kemalist approaches.

In Chapter One, I was careful to emphasise that the hegemonistic influence of Orientalism was much more complex than a linear, one-dimensional affair. Neither was it restricted to the Kemalists, as the effects of Orientalism were felt even in the Islamists’ discourses. Hence, it should not come as a surprise when we see that the *Diyanet* has taken a stance against superstitions that are remarkably similar to the Orientalists’ treatment. According to İsmail Kara, ‘it is seen that *Diyanet* has used or has been forced to use an outlook, which carries the main arguments and sediments of the nineteenth century Positivism, Protestantism and new Salafism, as a tool of pressure and transformation over folk religiosity, through its magazines, books, sermons, and general discourse.’<sup>332</sup>

In recent years, the popular magazine of the institution with the namesake, *Diyanet* published a special issue on superstitions, with the slogan ‘Neither from tying rags to trees, nor from fortune telling, assistance can only come from God.’<sup>333</sup> Another article published in another issue of the same magazine presented the results of a countrywide survey, in which the existence of 1380 superstitions were determined!<sup>334</sup> Miss Jane Pardoe, who visited Istanbul in 1836 while accompanying her father, Major Thomas Pardoe, listed a number of superstitions she observed in Turkey.<sup>335</sup> It is not surprising to find some of the superstitions she recorded 150 years ago to be still prevalent. Pardoe wrote that the Turks ‘have auspicious and inauspicious hours.’ The *Diyanet* survey illustrates her point: ‘It is believed that embarking on a trip on Tuesdays or Wednesdays brings bad luck’ or ‘It is believed that sweeping house during the night brings poverty.’ Pardoe wrote that when a Turk ‘is troubled with unpleasant dreams, haunted by melancholy fancies, or suffering from bodily disease, he tears away a fragment of his dress and fastens the rag to the iron-work of a window belonging to the tomb of a saint, in order to deposit the evil along with it.’ The *Diyanet* survey lists 73 superstitions related to the saints’ tombs.

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<sup>332</sup> *Ibid*, p. 79.

<sup>333</sup> The superstition of tying rags to trees has been discussed in the corresponding section in Chapter One.

<sup>334</sup> Koçoğlu, K. (2006) “21. Yüzyılın Türkiye’sinde Hurafeler,” *Diyanet Aylık Dergi*, no. 186, June 2006, pp. 5-8.

<sup>335</sup> Pardoe, M. (1854) *The City of the Sultan and Domestic Manners of the Turks, with a Steam Voyage up the Danube*, London: G. Routledge & Co., pp. 105-108.

## Crowding Out Religion from Public Sphere: Religious Buildings and the Urban Landscape in Turkey

### *Kemalist Policies and the Building of the Mosques*

During the single party years, Islam was literally crowded out of the public sphere. The silhouette of Istanbul, which had been the capital of the Ottoman Empire since 1453, was dominated by countless minarets and domes of the mosques, however, the newly built quarters of Ankara, the new capital of Turkey, would be conspicuously lacking in any mosque. In the words of Feroz Ahmad:

‘The Turkish capital was described by contemporaries in the 1930’s as a “city without minarets” for, apart from the Hacı Bayram mosque [built in the fifteenth century] in the old city, there was no mosque worthy of mention in the new Ankara. Not a single mosque of any size was built during the 27-year RPP rule; the Maltepe mosque in the modern part of the city was constructed in the 1950s after their electoral defeat. But its location did not allow it dominate the Ankara skyline. That honour was bestowed upon a secular temple, the mausoleum of Atatürk, ... it is visible from virtually anywhere in the city, especially at night when it is illuminated.’<sup>336</sup> Ahmad then tells the story of the Kocatepe mosque, which was completed in 1988 during Turgut Özal’s premiership, and then concludes, ‘Ankara had finally become a “city with minarets.”’<sup>337</sup>

My argument is not that it was the government’s fault for not building mosques in the newly built parts of Ankara, but that a regime claiming to be secular must not have prohibited individuals and civil organisations from building mosques, or in fact, any house of worship. Ahmad’s reference to Atatürk’s mausoleum as ‘a secular temple’ is fitting as well, because it reflects the tension secularist policies of the Kemalists created within Turkish society, pitting Kemalism against Islam, and Kemalist values against Islamic/traditional values. In late 1990s, during the ‘soft coup d’etat’ period of the so-called ‘28 February process,’ the secularist/Kemalist daily, *Hürriyet*, would even run a first page story, which claimed that the nightly illumination of the Kocatepe mosque was putting that of Atatürk’s mausoleum into shadow, and argued that this was yet another proof that the Islamists were scheming to topple the secularist regime in Turkey.

As it turns out, the *Hürriyet* newspaper has in recent times played a leading role in creating an antagonism between the secular, Kemalist values and the Islamic values. In 2005, the newspaper’s editor, Ertuğrul Özkök, while commenting on the background image in prime

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<sup>336</sup> Ahmad, F. (1993) *The Making of Modern Turkey*, p. 92.

<sup>337</sup> After the World War II, during the last years of the single party regime, Osman Yüksel Serdengeçti, a conservative nationalist journalist, published a book titled *Mabetsiz Şehir*, in which he referred to the new Ankara as a ‘city without temples.’ While the book caused a huge uproar in the Kemalist press, it was by then clear that the end of the single party regime was fast approaching.

minister Erdoğan's address to the nation, would note that in the night scene of Ankara, with respect to the 'gleaming' Kocatepe mosque, the lighting of Atatürk's mausoleum was 'less shiny.'<sup>338</sup>

Another columnist in the same newspaper, Özdemir İnce, criticised an MP of the Justice and Development Party, who said 'Kocatepe and Atatürk's mausoleum are both our values. We must lay claim to the both,' with the following words: 'As usual, their language is confused, the insincerity of their minds is clearly at display. ATATÜRK'S MAUSOLEUM refers to the SECULAR REPUBLIC OF TURKEY as a metaphor. Then what does KOCATEPE signify? They could pass over this question with the answer "It signifies Turkey, whose population is 99% Muslim." But the reality is not like that. The religious 'reference' is common and the same with the other parties that had been banned: In order to understand that Kocatepe symbolises the sharia regime it is sufficient to have the lowest linguistic consciousness.'<sup>339</sup>

This column was published in 2001, immediately after the establishment of the Justice and Development Party, and a few months after the Constitutional Court closed down Fazilet Party, on the grounds that it had become 'a locus of activities against secularism.' Yet, already at this very early stage, the author of this column was threatening the newly established party with closure. It is remarkable that he, like many Kemalists in Turkey in the 1990s and 2000s regarded secularism as the defining characteristic of Turkey. It is equally remarkable that he failed to recognise that a mosque was first and foremost the symbol of Islam, and comfortably saw it as a symbol of a 'secret desire to topple the regime and install a theocracy in its place.' Under these circumstances, anyone calling for respect for religious freedoms is bound to be 'guilty until proven innocent' by the Kemalists. When secularism is turned into such an intolerant and reactionary ideology by the neo-Kemalists of the post Cold War era, it is difficult to see how it can serve for the establishment of social justice in Turkey.

At this point, I would like to make a digression, and refer to a critical report of the High Council of Religious Affairs regarding the headscarves of the female students. The council was under the hierarchy of the *Diyanet*, hence it was within the state hierarchy. Just a few months after the 1980 coup d'état, the council took a considerable risk of angering the generals and defended the headscarf as 'a rule of Islam.' The council's warnings against putting the Turkish people under the dilemma of either choosing Kemalism or choosing God's commandments is a thoughtful contribution towards the flourishing of democracy, plurality, and social peace in Turkey. When

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<sup>338</sup> Özkök, E. (2005) "Kendi Damlarımızdaki Baykuşlar," *Hürriyet*, 2 July 2005. <http://hurarsiv.hurriyet.com.tr/goster/haber.aspx?id=331693&yazarid=10> (Accessed 2 February 2008).

<sup>339</sup> İnce, Ö. (2001) "Değişmeden Değişmek" *Hürriyet*, 12 August 2001. <http://webarsiv.hurriyet.com.tr/2001/08/12/15003.asp> (Accessed 2 February 2009). The translation is mine, while the capitalisations belong to the author.

compared with the reckless rhetoric of the secularists, who spare no target in their derogatory remarks and accusations, it is a refreshing change too. Finally, this is another proof that without tapping into the reserves of the Ottoman/Islamic tradition, it is impossible to move towards democracy, for that tradition alone carries a hegemonic potential:

‘Although in the report of the Ministry of National Education it is stated that women’s *hijab* clothing is “completely against the Atatürk’s principles,” for the women’s clothing that is not opposed to general ethics and laws, there is no issue of contradiction with Atatürk’s reforms and principles. ... In fact, it is a very dangerous policy, from the perspective of our country and the acceptance of Atatürk’s principles, to depict Atatürk and his principles as being against the rules of our religion regarding women’s clothing, as it is usually done. The Muslim Turkish citizen must not be left with such a grave choice as “Either God’s command or Atatürk’s principles.” It must not be forgotten that veiling is a rule of religion and Atatürk expressed that our religion is the last and the most perfect religion many times on different occasions.’<sup>340</sup>

The various discursive strategies of this report warrant careful analysis. Firstly, the report alludes to the fact that despite so many years of official propaganda, Atatürk’s reforms and principles had only received a shallow acceptance from the populace, and it politely warns the Kemalist cadres of the military coup that any further coercion would only serve to jeopardise that already limited acceptance. It does not bow under the Kemalist pressure that true Islam did not have the provision of women’s veiling by firmly declaring it to be a ‘rule of religion.’ It then substantiates its argument by pointing out Atatürk’s own words in favour of Islam. This can also be construed as an indirect message that even Atatürk’s reformist zeal had its limits. Overall, the report explicitly refrains from confrontation and it makes a conscious effort toward accommodation. After this crucial passage, the reports concludes by stating that the issue of women’s veiling is first and foremost a civil liberties and human rights issue and a ban would be against the fundamental rights and liberties of individuals guaranteed by the constitution.

#### *Kemalist Policies and the Destruction of Religious Architecture*

If preventing the individuals and civil organisations from building new mosques were one facet of the single party regime’s policies, the other face involved a systematic elimination of religious architecture, that is, the buildings of mosques, Sufi convents, *medreses*, etc., from the urban landscape in Turkey. During the single party rule of the Republican People Party, the number of such buildings, which were razed to ground, sold to individuals for private use, or converted to

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<sup>340</sup> The text of the report is provided in Kara, İ (2008) *Cumhuriyet Türkiye’si’nde Bir Mesele Olarak İslam*, p. 117.

other uses runs into thousands. Some of the mosques in the 1930s were closed down and used as military depots. Incredibly, the world-famous Blue Mosque, which was built in early seventeenth century by Sultan Ahmed I, and considered as one of the finest examples of Ottoman architecture, was one of those mosques closed to worship and used as a depot.<sup>341</sup>

In 1966, İsmet İnönü, the hero of the İnönü battles, the chief Turkish delegate at Lausanne Peace Conference, the first prime minister and the second president of the Turkish Republic, was left with only the title of the leader of the opposition party, the RPP. In response to the then prime minister's declaration that 'in Turkey, the mosques are open and worship is free,' he responded by claiming that never in the history of the republic were the mosques closed and worship forbidden.<sup>342</sup> This caused a strong public reaction, because nothing could be further from the truth.

A campaign was started in the *Yeni İstiklal* newspaper by the journalist Mehmed Şevket Eygi. He called on his readers to send him documentation regarding the destruction of religious architecture and he was flooded with letters from all over Turkey. One reader letter from Kayseri listed 12 mosques destroyed in 1930's and 1940's in that city and put the total number as around 20. Another letter from Konya listed 15 mosques as having been converted for use as depot during 'the tyranny of İnönü,' and listed 15 *medreses* and *mescids* (prayer houses for small congregations) as either razed, closed, or destroyed, and gave the total number as 120. The list of the desecrated mosques, *mescids*, and *medreses* went on and on and covered the whole country: 19 in Diyarbakır, 32 in Tokat, 20 in Çorum, 26 in Aydın, 9 in Rize... These numbers pertained to the cities that were provincial centres, but even in smaller towns, the situation was the same.

Eygi has published all these letters, along with the results of his own research on Istanbul in a poignant book.<sup>343</sup> Just in the quarter of Eminönü, he was able to document the destruction of 113 mosques and *mescids*, and he describes each one in detail, sometimes with photographs. For the remaining parts of Istanbul, the number of destroyed mosques he could document is 300. I should add that his numbers for Istanbul does not even include the buildings of Sufi convents or *medreses*.

Morgan Price, a British journalist and politician who had visited Turkey several times from 1911 onwards, notes: 'When I went to Turkey first after the Second World War, I found that all religions were being frowned upon by the Government. Turkey was no longer the strong arm in the world of Islam. Many mosques were closed and one heard no more the Mullah's call to

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<sup>341</sup> An analogy with Britain could be conversion of St. Paul's cathedral in London to a depot!

<sup>342</sup> İnönü, İ. (1966) "İnönü'nün Başbakanı Cevabı: Başbakanın silahları geri tepmiştir," *Ulus*, 12 October 1966.

<sup>343</sup> Eygi, M.Ş. (2003) *Yakın Tarihimizde Cami Kiyımı*, İstanbul: Tarih ve İbret Yay.

prayer.’<sup>344</sup> A 1929 *New York Times* article, titled ‘Mosques Give Way to Modern Flats,’ noted that the ‘Angora’ government, ‘with its utilitarian progressivism,’ decided to sell about one hundred small mosques.<sup>345</sup>

Among the religious buildings, which were converted to other uses, the ones converted as RPP buildings or the peoples’ houses are worth noting. If these religious buildings had been converted to schools, or libraries, the reaction might not have been that strong. But, when they were converted as RPP buildings or peoples’ houses, this implied an antagonism between the two, and an attack against religion. Such conversions were interpreted in the same category as the conversion of mosques to churches in the newly established nationalist Balkan states, or the conversion of religious buildings into Communist Party centres in Soviet Union. Another group of cases, that attracted much negative reaction and were perceived as the desecration of religious sensibilities, were those that involved conversion of religious buildings to ballrooms, bars, or even places of low repute down the ladder.

The destruction of religious buildings showed disrespect for people’s religious sensibilities, as well as a disregard for the Ottoman Turkish heritage. But beyond that, the destruction of places of worship were unacceptable to the Muslims because according to Islam, once a plot of land is reserved for use as a mosque, that land was considered as a mosque forever. It did not matter if the building turned into ruins due to neglect, was burned in a fire, destroyed in another natural disaster, or if the area was occupied by Christians and then the building was converted to church. In the eyes of its congregation, the mosque’s building or the plot of land it had once stood on stayed as a holy place. Hence, from the 1950s onwards, whenever the local communities found the means and the opportunity, they sought to buy the building or the land back and restore it as a mosque.

### **Appropriation of Private Endowments and Limitations on Private Charity**

When we look at the charity and welfare policies of the 1930s, we see a strong emphasis on the institutional basis, as the contemporary Kemalists would like. In order to support these institutions, private and non-governmental charity channels were suppressed or even banned. There was a strong propaganda to direct Islamic charitable acts to the public institutions.

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<sup>344</sup> Price, M.P. (1947) Morgan Phillips Price Papers, Middle East Centre, St Antony’s College, Oxford, GB165-Q232, Phillips Price, Box 1, File 4, pp. 61-62.

<sup>345</sup> Tinckom-Fernandez, W.G. (1929) “Mosques Give Way to Modern Flats,” *New York Times*, 3 February 1929.

When I was going through one newspaper collection in 1933, I only recognised that I was looking at the newspaper issues in Ramadan when I saw an announcement for *fitre*, a specific charity customarily given at the end of Ramadan. Apart from the fact that there was no other mention for this most significant Muslim annual period, the readers were called on to contribute their *fitre* charities to the Plane Society, which had been established to improve the Turkish air force! The *fitre* was given in Ramadan because it was the month of fasting and through voluntary fasting, people were expected to remember the plight of the poor who could not afford food and therefore went on involuntary fasting. Whole columns were devoted to the difficult task of explaining why people needed to give this charity to support Turkish air force instead of the poor and the needy.

Later named the Turkish Air Institution (THK), the *raison d'être* of this establishment would become the mandatory collection of the hides of sacrificed animals at the annual Muslim Feast of Sacrifice. When people did not want to donate their hides to this organisation and tried to give them to other charitable causes, the officials did not hesitate to call the police and confiscate the hides. Apart from running model-plane and parachute courses to a small circle of enthusiasts, this organisation did virtually nothing to help Turkish aviation, but even today, Kemalists find no contradiction with the principle of laicism and the mandatory collection of a religious charity by a semi-official institution.

Sevgi Adak Turan has studied the changing discourse regarding the Muslim holy month of Ramadan in the Kemalist newspaper, *Hakimiyeti Milliye*, in the period 1923-1938, and the findings of her detailed analysis agree with the conjectures I drew from my limited analysis of the newspapers from 1933.<sup>346</sup> Turan's starting point in her analysis is François Georgeon's study of the Ramadans in Istanbul during the late Ottoman Empire. Georgeon notes that Ramadans during the late Ottoman period were 'a form of "socialness" in the empire. The most important characteristic of this socialness was people's high level of participation in the special social atmosphere in which Ramadan was a organising element and religion had an apparent public appearance. ... For Georgeon, this period ... can be characterised as "Islamisation of the city" despite the clear attempt at modernisation in the Ottoman Empire.'<sup>347</sup>

Moving on to the republican period, Turan shows the gradual disappearance of Islam from the public sphere through numerous examples from the Kemalist newspaper, *Hakimiyeti Milliye*. She argues that 'the Kemalist regime regulated Ramadan and tried to transform its crucial position in the social and religious life of society. At the same time, it used the functional aspects of the

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<sup>346</sup> Turan, S.A. (2004) "Formation of Authoritarian Secularism in Turkey: Ramadans in the Early Republican Era (1923-1938)," Unpublished MA thesis, Sabanci University, Istanbul, Turkey.

<sup>347</sup> *Ibid*, p. 2.



Ramadan atmosphere and kept it under control in order to prevent it from being used as a possible means of social opposition or religious revival.’<sup>348</sup>

We have seen how in the short span of two years from 1923 to 1925, Mustafa Kemal’s public attitude towards Islam and the Ottoman Turkish heritage had changed. Throughout the 1930s, Mustafa Kemal would distance himself further and further from Islam, and would not even refrain from directly attacking it. For example, in 1937, when talking about the RPP party programme, he made a frequently-quoted statement: ‘Our main programme in public administration is the programme of the Republican People Party. The principles covered in it are the main lines that illuminate us in administration and politics. However, we should not consider these principles with the dogmas of the books that are thought to have been revealed from the sky. We do not receive our inspiration from the sky or the invisible world, but directly from life.’<sup>349</sup>

### **Strategies of the Kemalist Secularism in Defining the Parameters of the Political and Limits of Political Debate**

The Kemalists have employed a variety of arguments to keep the criticism to a minimum level, to define the parameters of the political, and to limit the scope of the political debate in Turkey. I shall discuss briefly some of these arguments below.

Kemalism exaggerates the role of Mustafa Kemal in the national liberation struggle to the point that he is declared as the sole ‘saviour’ of the country from foreign invasion. He is made to have singlehandedly saved the nation from annihilation, and founded the republic by himself. He looms so large in the narrative that there is no room for any other military or political figure to appear beside him. For Yalçın Küçük, every nation has a ‘pantheon’ of its heroes, and if that pantheon includes a large number of people, it is a sign of richness and it shows that the nation in question has come to terms with its history and written a pluralistic account. For Küçük, the ‘Turkish pantheon’ only includes Atatürk is a sign of the intellectual poverty in Turkey.<sup>350</sup>

Hence, one of the first reactions of the Kemalists against anyone attempting to criticise or simply be critical of Mustafa Kemal, his reforms or the Kemalist ideology, is to label them as being ‘thankless and ungrateful.’ The Kemalists are quick to reply to criticism from the conservative or

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<sup>348</sup> *Ibid*, p. vi.

<sup>349</sup> Atatürk, M.K. (1937) “TBMM Açılış Konuşması,” 1 November 1937. This was Mustafa Kemal’s last speech at the parliament. Turkish text available online at: [http://www.tbmm.gov.tr/tarihce/Atatürk\\_konusma/5d3yy.htm](http://www.tbmm.gov.tr/tarihce/Atatürk_konusma/5d3yy.htm) (Last accessed 6 November 2009).

<sup>350</sup> Küçük, Y. (2006) *Gizli Tarih*, Vol. 1, İstanbul: Salyangoz Yay., p. 97.

religious people by claiming that 'if Mustafa Kemal had not existed, you would not be able to live your religion in this country. You would not even be Muslim, because they would have forced you to become Christian. Your name would not be Ahmed or Ali, but Alex or Niko! So, stop criticising Mustafa Kemal and show your gratitude to him!' Clearly this line of thinking cannot lead towards civil society and respect for liberties.

Once Mustafa Kemal is depicted as the 'saviour,' then it becomes incumbent upon people to show their infinite gratitude by giving him their unquestioning and unconditional support and loyalty. In the campaign period for the local elections in 1930, the Kemalist newspaper in İzmir, *Anadolu*, called people to vote for the RPP, instead of the opposition party, the Free Republican Party, by running the following headlines:

'Dear İzmir people, Do not forget your party, which has saved your country from the enemy and saved you from captivity! By voting for the Republican People Party, you will confirm your gratitude to the Great Saviour.'<sup>351</sup>

'Voting for the RPP candidates is a national debt!'<sup>352</sup>

'Ladies of İzmir! It is the Republican People Party who gave you the right to vote. The local elections are approaching. It is a duty for the ladies of İzmir to vote for the Republican People Party, which gave them all their civil and political rights just like the right to vote. It is impossible for them to act otherwise. Ladies of İzmir! Vote for the Republican People Party. It is the RPP that has endowed you with this civil and holy right. The greatest virtue of the Turkish woman is her gratitude.'<sup>353</sup>

The Kemalist discourse saw granting political rights as a favour it granted. In the process of top-down political reforms, when such rights were not earned through political struggle, but simply granted like this, as a gift from a higher authority, they meant little. The Kemalist elite envisioned themselves as being above the people. Under these circumstances, when the people did not behave as expected, and tried to vote the RPP out, the Kemalist elite would accuse the people for being ungrateful.

The Kemalists take great pains to portray the religious conservatives as lacking in patriotic feelings, insincerity, and corruption. One strategy they employ in portraying the religious elements in the negative light is to emphasise the legal opinion (*fetva*) of the Ottoman şeyhülislam, who was the highest ranking Islamic scholar in the country, approving the Istanbul government's death sentence. A typical example is Niyazi Berkes' treatment of this issue. He

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<sup>351</sup> *Anadolu* (1930), 25 September 1930, p. 1.

<sup>352</sup> *Ibid*, p. 1.

<sup>353</sup> *Ibid*, p. 1.

refers to this opinion, which disapproved the national struggle in Anatolia and regarded it as a rebellion against the legitimate sultan and the caliph, however, he is silent on the equally important counter opinion, prepared by Rifat Börekçi, the *mufti* of Ankara, and also signed by many religious scholars in Anatolia, which declared that since the sultan and the caliph was a hostage of the Allied powers in the occupied Istanbul, he could not perform his duties to lead the nation in the liberation struggle, hence any order emanating from Istanbul and any legal opinion in this direction would not be valid.<sup>354</sup> Likewise, Berkes talks at length about rebellions throughout Anatolia against the Ankara government, carrying religious tones and declaring allegiance to the 'treacherous' Ottoman sultan, but he does not mention the widespread support for the national cause by the religious scholars in Anatolia.

The Kemalists also conveniently forget the religious rhetoric that was dominant in the early phases of the national struggle. When Berkes talks about the first sessions of the National Assembly in Ankara from 23 April 1920 onwards, he completely ignores the fact that 23 April was chosen as the opening day of the parliament by express orders of Mustafa Kemal solely because it fell on Friday, the Muslim holiday.<sup>355</sup> In similar fashion, he does not mention that one of the very first acts of the parliament was to pledge allegiance to the sultan, and declare determination to save him from captivity. The 1 May 1920 speech of Mustafa Kemal that we have analysed in great detail above is not found in his treatment, either.

I would like to continue with Berkes, and look at how he treats the opposition against Mustafa Kemal and the Republican People Party in the years 1923-25. Berkes uniformly labels the opposition as 'Khilâfatists,' that is, supporters of the caliphate. Since caliphate for him is a medieval and retarded institution, and incompatible with the modern ideas of republicanism, or national sovereignty, he does not have to further elaborate on that point. He also accuses the opposition with having the secret intent to reinstate theocracy in what he calls as 'Şeriatism.'<sup>356</sup> But he completely ignores the fact that the main concern of the opposition in this period was to prevent the establishment of an absolutist regime hiding behind the republican mask. He never mentions Rauf Bey's passionate warnings in this context. Rauf Bey (Orbay) was accused for being a supporter of sultanate and caliphate, but he defended himself with the following words at the parliament: 'Far from being a supporter of sultanate and caliphate, I am even opposed to any office aiming to appropriate the powers of [the sultanate and caliphate].' He is indirectly declaring his opposition to the accumulation of absolute powers in Mustafa Kemal's hands.

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<sup>354</sup> Berkes, N. (1964) *The Development of Secularism in Turkey*, p. 441.

<sup>355</sup> *Ibid*, p. 439.

<sup>356</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 446-456.

The final argument I will refer to, that the Kemalists employ in their effort to ward off criticism is their claim that 'Turkey is the best country in the Muslim world for Muslims to live their religion freely.' We find this claim in as early as 1925, in a speech of the prime minister, İsmet İnönü:

'Regarding what we have done as detrimental to religion means not seeing what has been accomplished. We are of the opinion that what has been done has no relation whatsoever with irreligion. Let us succeed in this system, let us walk along this path that we have successfully embarked upon for ten years... After ten years, the whole world, those who are opposing us now, or those who worry in the name of religion about the path we have taken shall see that the cleanest, purest, and the most genuine form of Islam has appeared in us.'<sup>357</sup>

### **Secularising Reforms of Kemalism: Kemalism as the New Religion of Turkey?**

Regardless of the explicitly stated or unstated intentions of Kemalists, the secularising reforms of Kemalism was seen by many observers, especially in the west, as working towards a general disappearance of Islam from the public sphere, and its prestige in Turkish society tarnished. The British ambassador in Constantinople (İstanbul), in a diplomatic report, referred to the status of Islam in Turkey as 'Islam disestablished and generally at a discount'.<sup>358</sup> Morgan Price, a British journalist and politician who had visited Turkey several times from 1911 onwards, observed that 'the National Revolution gave great encouragement to secular modes of thought and the Mohammedan religion was for a long time under a cloud.'<sup>359</sup> A travelogue published in the late 1930s when Atatürk was still alive, about the travels of a German writer, Lilo Linke, in Turkey is titled *Allah Dethroned*.<sup>360</sup> Clearly, in the Turkish case secularisation proceeded at the expense of Islam.

It might be argued that secularisation is a process that universally works to the disadvantage of religion. However, in the West, secularisation, advances in science and rational thinking, and the generally decreasing importance of religion in people's lives all took place over centuries, in a way that makes it very hard to determine a direct cause-and-effect relationship among them. Did the scientific revolution and Enlightenment thinking directly cause people to pay less attention to

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<sup>357</sup> Quoted in Yücel, H.A. (1994) *Türkiye'de Ortaöğretim*, Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı Yay., p. 24.

<sup>358</sup> Clerk, G. (1928) "Sir G. Clerk to Sir Austen Chamberlain" dated 29 May 1928, British National Archives, India Office Records, IOR/L/PS/11/281, E2877/560/44.

<sup>359</sup> Price, M.P. (1947) Morgan Phillips Price Papers, Middle East Centre, St Antony's College, Oxford, GB165-Q232, Phillips Price, Box 1, File 4, p. 61.

<sup>360</sup> Linke, L. (1938) *Allah Dethroned*, London: Constable. Interestingly, the page opposite the book's inner title page carried a portrait of Mustafa Kemal in full regalia, wearing a western tuxedo as the president of Turkey.

religion, or was the scientific revolution made possible because Christianity's central position in European thinking were challenged with the Reformation? When referring to processes that had been going on for a very long time, it is very hard to isolate one and call it as the primary process that set all the others in motion. Kemalism's fallacy was to assume that attacking the position of Islam in the Turkish society would automatically lead people to act in a rational, or 'western' way. Furthermore, Kemalism's displacement of Islam from the public sphere did not even create a scientific and rational mindset in Turkey. Kemalism attempted to take the place formerly occupied by Islam, and in the meantime, turned itself into a modern religion.

In Chapter Two, I have referred to the exaltation of Mustafa Kemal as Atatürk as a widespread phenomenon in Kemalism. There I argued that the most important aspect of the exaggerated praise of Atatürk was the extensive reliance on religious or even mystical terminology, which showed that Kemalism had not succeeded to create a rational or scientific mindset in Turkey. I shall provide further examples here, showing how loyalty to Kemalism was described as an issue of faith.

In 1940 Vedat Nedim Tör, who as a member of the *Kadro* (Cadre) group tried to formulate Kemalism along socialist lines in the 1930s, published a book titled *Dinimiz* (Our Religion) on Kemalism. Another Kemalist, Behçet Kemal Çağlar, reviewed Tör's book in the following words: 'We cannot simply entrust Kemalism to placards, numbers, regulations, or programmes, and then move on. It must be digested as a faith (*iman*) and all generations must be made to embrace it. Besides the comprehending mind, it is necessary to have a believing soul and a heart that beats with knowing passion such a belief shall give. Vedat Nedim Tör has titled his book as *Our Religion* precisely for this reason. ... For the young souls, who would like to have majestic targets, and who are thirsty for great beliefs, this book is a national Catechism. ... Tomorrow's Turkey is such a religion in our hearts that only for it do we take fanaticism as acceptable and tolerance a sin. ... It is our religion to turn Turkey to a paradise. It is our prayers to work towards this goal. The road towards heaven in the afterlife, if it exists at all, passes through Turkey's paradise, too.'<sup>361</sup>

In 1928, we find the English journalist Grace Ellison quoting a Turkish school headmaster, in her book on the contemporary developments in Turkey, as saying: 'Our prophet is Gazi [Mustafa Kemal Atatürk]! We are done with the person from Arabia. Muhammad's religion was very good for Arabia, however it is not good for us. ... I believe in Gazi, science, my country's future and myself. ... There exists science, the power of good and bad. No one can certainly say anything for the rest.'<sup>362</sup> At an address given at Chatham House on 4 March 1937, the German author Lilo

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<sup>361</sup> Çağlar, B.K. (1940) "Dinimiz," *Ulus*, 6 October 1940; Quoted in Kara, İ. (2008) *Cumhuriyet Türkiye'si'nde Bir Mesele Olarak İslam*, p. 28.

<sup>362</sup> Ellison, G. (1928) *Turkey Today*, London: Hutchinson, p. 188.

Linke told the audience about her observations during her travels in the Anatolian countryside. She stated that she had spoken chiefly with young people, and had found no religious desires in them. She was convinced that ‘for the majority of the youth of Turkey, nationalism was the only religion. Atatürk had taken the place of Allah for them.’<sup>363</sup>

I would like to conclude this section on another British diplomatic report, which shows why the West, especially the British, supported the secularisation drive of Kemalism in Turkey. While informing his superiors that reference to Islam in the Turkish constitution was removed and describing the general developments towards secularisation, a British diplomat expressed his opinion on how these developments would affect the British interests: ‘The important consideration for ourselves is that each step in the official secularisation of Turkey has put it increasingly out of the power of this country to use the weapon of religion against us in our Eastern dependencies. It has also undermined the general prestige of Islam and should weaken in all parts of the world its more militant side.’<sup>364</sup>

In late nineteenth and early twentieth century, one of the biggest concerns of the British policy towards the Ottoman Empire was the Pan-Islamist policies of Abdülhamid II, which they feared would incite Muslims under British colonial rule towards rebellion. This quote clearly illustrates that as long as Kemalism confined Turkish nationalism to the contemporary borders of Turkey, and as long as Kemalism attacked Islam and tarnished its prestige, the British would not mind whether Kemalism was a barrier towards such western political concepts as democracy, civil liberties, and rule of law, or not. I also would like to note that reference in this quote to Islam’s ‘more militant side’ is strangely reminiscent of the post 9/11 rhetoric.

Finally, this quote may well be used by the proponents of a ‘secret agreement’ between the British and the Kemalists, which I have referred to above. They might call this a ‘smoking gun’ for the collusion between the two parties. It must be admitted that this quote does not establish any causality between the claims of these conspiracy theorists, yet it must at the same time be noted that the domestic secularising policies of Kemalism had repercussions that far exceeded the contemporary boundaries of Turkey at the time, and had wider implications for the whole Muslim World.

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<sup>363</sup> Linke, L. (1937) “Social Changes in Turkey,” *International Affairs*, Vol. 16, No. 4, p. 559.

<sup>364</sup> Knox, G. G. (1928) “Mr. Knox to Sir Austen Chamberlain” dated 23 April 1928, British National Archives, India Office Records, IOR/L/PS/11/281, E2117/128/44, p. 2. Mr. Knox represented the British government in Ankara. Although Ankara was declared as the capital of the new Turkish state on 13 October 1923, the western powers were reluctant to move their embassies from İstanbul to Ankara – the move would not be completed before the 1930s.

Secularism was the most important element of Kemalism in its war against the traditional thinking and way of life in Turkey. Kemalists enthusiastically adopted a radical positivistic outlook and mistakenly equated it with the whole western tradition, ignoring all the reactions to and criticism against positivism. Science became the new sacred of Kemalism. As Veit Bader notes, Kemalists viewed secularism in a way that elevated it to the status of the 'meta-narrative' of modernisation (as it happened in the West and as it *had to* happen only that way). This 'meta-narrative' was about the inevitable march of history in a 'linear, dichotomist, evolutionary' manner towards 'progress, reason, rationality, science, civilization, humanity, freedom, equality, and democracy.'<sup>365</sup>

In the Kemalist discourse, secularism corresponded to much more than a political ideology or a policy statement. It was a worldview and a way of life. It was the defining character of Kemalism. A recent decision of the Turkish Constitutional Court identified secularism as 'a civilized way of life that forms the basis for an understanding of freedom and democracy, for independence, national sovereignty, and the humanist ideal, which has developed as a result of overcoming medieval dogmatism in favour of the primacy of reason and enlightened sciences.'<sup>366</sup> When the Kemalist brand of secularism is defined as 'a civilized way of life,' it automatically gives grounds for the dismissal of any alternative interpretation towards securing the 'secularity' of the political regime, or any criticism of this particular understanding of secularism.

## **Conclusion**

I started this chapter with a brief overview of the general debates on secularism and secularisation, referring to the former as an ideology and the latter as a process. That overview uncovered the significance of the fact that both secularism and secularisation developed in the west in parallel with and at the same time as other concepts, such as democracy and liberalism. In other words, the west underwent modernisation at a 'natural' pace. Turkey, however, had to undergo the centuries-long transformation of the West in a much shorter time period, in an 'imposed' or 'unnatural' manner, at the hands of the modernisers, who from late nineteenth century onwards increasingly subscribed to Kemalism, as I defined in Chapter One. The outcome

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<sup>365</sup> Bader, Veit (2010) "Constitutionalizing secularism, alternative secularisms or liberal-democratic constitutionalism?" p. 29.

<sup>366</sup> Karakaş, C. (2007) "Turkey Islam and Laicism: Between the Interests of State, Politics and Society," Peace Research Institute, PRIF Reports no. 78.

was that secularism as practiced by the Kemalists was more of a militant and intolerant brand, and secularisation, when carried out without links to democracy and civil liberties, served for the authoritarian tendency of Kemalism.

Kemalists wanted to Turkey to quickly transform and become just as powerful and as modern as the west, and the only way towards achieving that goal seemed importing the western political institutions wholesale, including secularism. However, as recognised from early on, differences between Christianity and Islam meant that western model could not be applied that easily in Turkey. Christianity had from its earliest days accepted the existence of 'Caesar's right' as distinct from and besides 'God's right,' whereas in Islam, such a 'secular' division had not existed. Over time, under the influence of the hegemonic discourse 'Islam is a barrier towards progress,' Islam, or rather, 'corrupted Islam' became the general signifier the whole Ottoman Turkish/Islamic tradition that had caused the Turks to lag behind in the relentless race among the nations towards progress. One Kemalist writer in 1933 was so worked up in the revolutionary zeal to break away from tradition that he regarded 'cutting of ties with the past, draw the curtain up to the period of the Arabic script, and burning all these fairy tales filling up the libraries in sizzling fire' as the rightful course of action.<sup>367</sup> Another called for 'getting rid of old literary works from curricula, and adopt the Greek and Latin literature, which are the common heritage of nations.'<sup>368</sup>

For the Kemalists, Islam became a central 'problem,' which would pop up in almost every issue, 'from the abolition of the caliphate to the Civil Code, from the Hat Law to the script reform, from the pure Turkish movement to urban planning, from cemetery visits to sanative waters ... with negative connotations.'<sup>369</sup>

Sevgi Turan, in her study on how the Kemalists treated Ramadan, the Muslim holy month, calls the secularism of Kemalism as 'authoritarian secularism,' and identifies four main 'pillars' on which it rose: 'Diminishing the visibility of Islam; total control over the religious sphere, including limiting people's religiosity; a claim to true Islam; and nationalisation of Islam.'<sup>370</sup> In this chapter, we have seen in detail how these 'pillars' were put into action.

We have seen that the secularist discourse of Kemalism dealt with the problem of Islam in two major strategies. Firstly, it limited and restricted the 'appearance' of Islam in the public sphere.<sup>371</sup> It tried to make Islam as an invisible element in Turkey. A communiqué issued by the General Administration of Press Affairs to the newspapers in 1945, towards the end of the single party

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<sup>367</sup> Burhan Cahit (1933) "Lamelifin Bacağı!" *Milîyet*, 4 June 1933, p. 3.

<sup>368</sup> Eşref Edib (1967) *Kara Kitab*, İstanbul: Sebilürreşad, p. 62.

<sup>369</sup> Kara, İ. (2008) *Cumhuriyet Türkiye'sinde Bir Mesele Olarak İslam*, p. 210.

<sup>370</sup> Turan, S.A. (2004) "Formation of Authoritarian Secularism in Turkey: Ramadans in the Early Republican Era (1923-1938)," pp. 120-122.

<sup>371</sup> Meeker, M. (2003) *A Nation of Empire*, pp. 52-55.



regime observed that 'recent press coverage included some articles, opinions, allusions and representations related to religion' and ordered the newspapers 'stay away from publishing any kind of article, column, or serial features on the subject of religion, either historically, or through representation, or through opinions.'<sup>372</sup> Another communiqué by the General Administrator for Press Affairs, Vedat Nedim Tör,<sup>373</sup> had declared that 'in no form and appearance whatsoever, we do not favour the creation of a religious atmosphere within the country and the establishment of a nursery garden of religious mentality for the youth.'<sup>374</sup>

At the same time, Kemalism attempted to redefine, and even reform Islam, through making a distinction between a 'true Islam' which was fully compatible with science and reason, and 'corrupted Islam,' which referred to the state of the religion in the twentieth century. With reference to the particular issue of women's veiling, the first strategy outlawed women wearing *hijab* or headscarves to attend schools and then find work after graduation, while the second strategy lectured them that their interpretation of Islam was simply wrong and that 'true Islam' did not require women to wear *hijab*. The result was a peculiar combination, in that, although Muslims formed the overwhelming majority of the country's population, they were never allowed to establish their own independent congregations and enjoy religious freedoms.

In 1919, during the dark days of the armistice, when the Ottoman capital had been occupied by Allied powers, and when prospects did not look bright for Turkey, a telegraph appeared in the newspapers, signed by a group of women. The telegraph referred to the heroism of the Turkish army at Dardanelles and declared that the nation was not 'defeated.' It then went on to bravely state: 'We express our regrets to those who rip our face veils apart, and then declare that they are fighting for the freedom of the world. If there is no government and no man to protect our national rights and our purity, there are us.'<sup>375</sup> We see that in 1919, 'face veil' symbolised women's honour, as well as national liberty and freedom. Here it was not just a religious stipulation, but represented the Turkish culture and the way of life, in other words, the sociological reflection of religion. After the secular reforms of Kemalism, even the headscarf would become an existential threat to national security, not to mention the face veil.

On the one hand, Kemalist secularism was opposed to Islam and tried to limit or eliminate its influence in society. On the other hand, it created an 'official Islam' and sponsored it to the detriment of other interpretations. Michael Meeker calls this peculiar marriage as 'Kemalo-

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<sup>372</sup> Eşref Edib (1967) *Kara Kitab*, p. 29.

<sup>373</sup> Tör had been educated in Moscow in the 1920s. He was one of the prominent authors in the *Kadro* (*Cadre*) journal, which was published in 1933-1936 and which tried to fill in the ideological void of Kemalism with their peculiar brand of 'national etatism.'

<sup>374</sup> Tör, V.N. (1942) Republic of Turkey, Ministry of Internal Affairs, General Administration of Press Affairs, no. 658, 17 May 1942; cited in Eşref Edib (1967) *Kara Kitab*, p. 3.

<sup>375</sup> Atay, F. R. (1953) *Çankaya*, İstanbul: Dünya Yay., pp. 44-45.

Islamism.<sup>376</sup> Another remarkable expression referring to the unusual state of things in Turkey is 'Thank God we are secular.'<sup>377</sup> For Olivier Roy, there is simply no 'separation between church and state, because imams are government employees.'<sup>378</sup> Perry Anderson agrees: 'For even when at apparent fever pitch, Turkish secularism has never been truly secular.'<sup>379</sup> Finally Betül Çelik: 'Kemalist secularism, thus, despite its scepticism against Islam and its very attempt to limit religion's place in community life, remains 'a very Islamic kind of secularism.'<sup>380</sup>

The 'protection of religious minorities against unbound democratic majoritarianism' is one of the 12 different senses or types of secularism Bader discusses.<sup>381</sup> It might be argued that Kemalist secularism was intolerant towards religious minorities in Turkey, and there is certainly truth in this argument, but the above remarks and the lengthy discussion in this chapter should be sufficient to establish that the real menace of Kemalist secularism comes from the fact that it treats the Ottoman Turkish tradition and the religious beliefs of the majority of Turkish people as a religious minority. In other words, Kemalist secularism tries to sideline Islam to a minority faith and replace it with its secularist understanding of Islam.

Secularism in Turkey managed to control religion by outlawing the Sufi orders, closing down religious schools and the Sufi convents, and by the incessant discourse of an imminent danger of a 'regressive' movement of religious fanaticism and bigotry. The nationalisation of private endowments (*vakf*) was a blow to the traditional income sources of the religious services, which suffered heavily during the single party regime. The charity channels, which had previously been mainly channelled through the works of the Sufi orders, and which were also a main source of income for religious students, were monopolized by the state towards causes, for example support for Turkish aviation industry. Finally, the *Diyanet* was the main tool of the Kemalist regime to control religion. Through the *Diyanet*, the state controlled and still controls every mosque, every sermon, and every preacher.

In their offensive against Islam, the Kemalists were armed with a powerful weapon: the material wealth of the west and the superiority of the western science and technology, as opposed to the

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<sup>376</sup> Meeker, M. (2003) *A Nation of Empire*, pp. 78-81, 392.

<sup>377</sup> This is the title of an article by two anthropologists, one of whom, Nancy Lindisfarne (formerly Tapper) later published it as a book in Turkish: Tapper, Richard and N. Tapper (1988) "'Thank God We're Secular': Aspects of Fundamentalism in a Turkish Town," in L. Caplan (ed.) *Studies in Religious Fundamentalism*, London: Macmillan, pp. 51-78; Lindisfarne, N. (2001) *Elhamdülillah Laikiz (Thank God, We're Secular: Gender, Islam and Turkish Republicanism)*, İstanbul: İletişim. She says she took the title from a political cartoon that appeared in the staunch Kemalist daily, *Cumhuriyet*.

<sup>378</sup> Roy, O. (2005) *Secularism Confronts Islam*, p. 14.

<sup>379</sup> Anderson, P. (2008) "Kemalism," *The London Review of Books*.

<sup>380</sup> Çelik, N.B. (1996) "Kemalist Hegemony from Its Constitution to Its Dissolution," Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Essex, p. 157.

<sup>381</sup> Bader, Veit (2010) "Constitutionalizing secularism, alternative secularisms or liberal-democratic constitutionalism?," p. 21.

abject poverty of the east (the Islamic lands) and the failure of the Oriental (Islamic) civilisation. Although Kemalists sometimes made a distinction between 'true Islam' and 'the traditional Islam, which has become corrupted after many centuries of superstition,' to most lay people, the difference mattered little, since they did not make such a distinction themselves. As a result, the prevailing perception was simply that not only the superstitions and later innovations, but the very essence of their belief was under attack. For many conservatives, this constituted part of a larger offensive against Islam, which had been going on for centuries.

Many western observers were quite impressed by the Kemalist reforms, since they looked like remarkable achievements in such a short time, however, these observers did not pay sufficient attention to the fact that most of these reforms were simply legal measures with little regard towards securing popular consent. Regarding the Hat Law, there is a *de facto* situation in Turkey with some degree of freedoms but also with the constant threat of their disappearance, and there is a *de jure* situation, which can neither be changed, nor faithfully executed, but which still remains in force. This aptly describes Kemalism's situation in contemporary Turkey, and hence the central argument of this thesis that from the outset, Kemalism had been a negative force, lacking the powers of a hegemonic discourse, hence unable to hegemonize the discursive horizon, but preventing another hegemony to take control. Kemalism was and still is a barrier towards democratic progress in Turkey. In order for the democratic debate in Turkey to flourish, Turkey must come to terms with the founding elements of the Kemalist discourse, and move beyond it.

So, how can Turkey move out of the Kemalist conundrum? Kemalists today do not refrain from antagonising the political beyond imagination and do not recognise their opponents any legitimacy. On the other hand, the 1980 report of the High Council of Religious Affairs, which I have discussed above, shows maturity and restraint and uses a very careful language to avoid any confrontation or misunderstanding. This shows that the path towards a pluralistic democracy in Turkey passes through respecting religious sensibilities and receiving strength from the Ottoman Turkish/Islamic tradition.

I would like to point out one minor way how civil society in Turkey today has managed to overcome the barrier of Kemalism. In my overview of the Kemalist reform laws that the constitution placed under protection, I have referred to the stipulation that *all* marriage contracts had to be drawn up in front of the civil marriage official. The civil marriage officials are not employees of the central government, where the influence of the Kemalist bureaucratic elite is at its strongest, but employees of the municipalities, which are more amenable to local sensibilities. In the last few years, many mayors throughout the country, especially in smaller towns and in the countryside, have chosen to appoint these officials from among the faculty of theology graduates. Since there is no church in Islam, there is no need for any official ordainment. To the extent that

people respect their sincerity and their knowledge in religious matters, and to the extent that people give their consent in their moral and spiritual authority, they can be considered as imams. These civil marriage officials perform ceremonies that are in accordance with *both* the civil, secular code and the Islamic law. They even perform the customary prayer in both Arabic and Turkish at the end of the ceremony, to give a spiritual aura. The government gets marriages under registration, and people get a ceremony which fulfils their religious obligations. Of course, if the marrying couples or their families do not want any trace of religion in the ceremony, they are still able to get it.

We see that while the secularism of Kemalism envisioned an antagonism with religion, which also could mean antagonism with tradition, culture and way of life, and tried to replace it with secular practices, which were perceived as 'alien' by the people at large, the solution found by common people refrains from confrontation, seeks reconciliation, and nods towards plurality. These are small steps, but through such small steps the 'Kemalist barrier' is being eroded.

## Chapter Four

### The Kemalist Legitimation Strategies

Legitimation may be defined as the sum of all discursive strategies that are employed to convince people that it is right and just for a ruler, party, or regime to rule over a populace may be called as legitimation. In this chapter I shall have a close look at the Kemalist legitimation strategies, because they hold the potential to reveal us the inner workings of the Kemalist ideology. I will also be looking at the legitimation strategies the Ottomans had employed, which were based on the concepts of the Ottoman Turkish/Islamic tradition. Legitimation is an absolute necessity for the establishment and continuation of *any* political order, and for Kemalism it is a matter of life and death, because Kemalism arose as a rebellion against the existing Ottoman order.

I will also discuss in detail the various names by which Mustafa Kemal was known during his lifetime, especially Gazi and Atatürk. I will argue that changes in his names served Mustafa Kemal's particular needs for legitimacy during his career. Furthermore, Mustafa Kemal disposing his Arabic sounding names and acquiring Atatürk as surname showed the dimensions of Kemalist utopia in getting rid of the past completely and creating a brand new social order. I will then argue that Mustafa Kemal's surname, Atatürk, signified the Kemalist attempt to define a new Turkish identity, based on allegiance to Kemalism.

#### Kemalist vs Ottoman Turkish Strategies for Legitimacy

It might be argued that politics is all about power, and the political is the terrain over which the struggle to acquire and hold power is fought. However, power in its naked form is such a stark reality that it immediately alienates those holding it from those subject to it and carries in it the seeds of conflict. The famous saying on the evil aspects of power states 'Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.' One solution to the inherent tension the naked exercise of power creates could be in concealing it, either in the myriad labyrinths of a bureaucracy so that no one seems to hold it, or in the forms of suzerainty, guardianship, or protectorate. These, however, only increase the need for legitimation.

In an introductory article on 'political legitimacy,' David Beetham opines, 'Since the dawn of human history, those occupying positions of power, and specially political power, have sought to ground their authority in a principle of legitimacy, which shows why their *access to, and exercise of*, power is rightful, and why those subject to it have a corresponding duty to obey.'<sup>382</sup> This is especially true when power *changes* hands and the legitimacy of the new ruler or the regime is still in question. In such instances, legitimacy becomes the battleground. From 1919 until 1925, Mustafa Kemal methodically eliminated all possible and actual elements of opposition to his power, but his most significant triumph was his success in driving the Ottoman dynasty out of power, out of country, and out of prestige.

At this point, I would like to make a distinction between the two situations. The first situation is when power changes hands. The second is when some form of stability is achieved. I argue that legitimacy becomes an issue only with a challenge to it; hence the legitimacy problem is essentially the legitimacy crisis problem. This assertion is even more valid within the Turkish context, due to the extreme reluctance in the Ottoman Turkish and Islamic traditions to rise against an illegitimate but stable rule, in the name of preserving order.<sup>383</sup>

The House of Osman survived numerous calamities throughout its six centuries-long life, but each time it proved those predicting its death wrong. At the zenith of its power, territory under the Ottoman rule over suzerainty covered the whole eastern Roman Empire, if not more. For centuries, the Ottomans projected an image as the protectors of the holy sites of Islam and the pilgrimage routes, and as the defenders of the Islamic world against the crusading threat from Europe. The Ottoman armies were victorious in many famous battles, against the crusading armies at Kosovo in 1389, at Nicopolis in 1396, at Mohacs in 1526, and at Lepanto in 1538.<sup>384</sup> Many great cities, but most importantly Constantinople, the capital of Byzantium, had fallen into the Ottomans. From the sixteenth century onwards, the Ottoman sultans carried the title of caliph, which gave them enormous prestige all over the Islamic world. Muslim rulers from Goa to Aceh, from Kashgar to Zanzibar paid their respects and called for help.

Hence, regardless of the size of the disastrous defeat the Ottoman state faced in World War I, the abolition of the sultanate in 1922 *and* the abolition of the caliphate one and a half years later in 1924 were no trivial affairs. Abolition of political institutions did not automatically translate into

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<sup>382</sup> Beetham, D. (2001) "Political Legitimacy," in *The Blackwell Companion to Political Sociology*, K. Nash and A. Scott (eds.), Malden and Oxford: Blackwell, p. 107. The emphasis is mine. Beetham has also written a book devoted exclusively to legitimacy and its relationship with power: Beetham, D. (1991) *The Legitimation of Power*, Basingstoke: Macmillan.

<sup>383</sup> El-Affendi, A. (2008) *Who Needs an Islamic State?*, London: Malaysia Think Tank, pp. 72-78.

<sup>384</sup> Inalcik, H. (1989) "The Ottoman Empire and the Crusades (1329-1451)" in *A History of the Crusades, vol. VI: The Impact of the Crusades on Europe*, N. P. Zacour and H. W. Hazard, (eds.), Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, pp. 222-275.

the erasing of all those memories, stories, and social, cultural and even religious bonds. Despite Mustafa Kemal's clearly decisive victory in his political struggle to eliminate all opposition, the hegemonic task of dominating the discursive horizon in Turkey was much harder, which involved (or one could even argue, *had to involve*) an all-out smear campaign against all things Ottoman. In fact, the Kemalist discourse constructed the 'old vs new' antagonism in such a contrast that there was no leeway for a smoother transition.

In this section, I compare Kemalist strategies for legitimacy with Ottoman Turkish strategies, as found in the Ottoman chronicles from the fourteenth century onwards. At that time, the Ottoman state had become an empire, but the humble origins of the Ottoman dynasty were a problem that needed explanation. In order to legitimise Ottoman rule, some discursive strategies were devised. I argue that there are some striking parallels between those strategies and the ones employed by Mustafa Kemal.

### *The Ottoman Legitimation Problem*

In the political and social milieu of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries that the Ottoman state emerged, there were two major lineages that carried legitimacy.<sup>385</sup> The first one was the Anatolian Seljuks, which were related to the Great Seljuks, whose sultan Alp Arslan in 1071 had defeated the Byzantines at the Battle of Manzikert, a victory conventionally taken as having opened the gates of Anatolia to the Turks. The second source of legitimacy came from Genghis Khan, the great Mongol conqueror. He had managed to establish an empire from China to the shores of the Mediterranean. Although he did not live long and his empire was soon divided into pieces, the legacy and the prestige of Genghis Khan would live well into the seventeenth century. In western Asia, the Ilkhanids were the successors to Genghis Khan and hence carried the mantle of legitimacy.

The Ottoman principality came to being during the power vacuum in Anatolia in the late thirteenth century, which was due to the dissolution of the Anatolian Seljuk polity especially after its defeat by the Ilkhanids at the Köseadağ Battle in 1243. It was one of the smallest of the Turcoman principalities that emerged in that period, but thanks to its location at the Byzantine frontier, it expanded without losing its energies against other Turcoman principalities. The Ottomans soon crossed into Thrace and continued expanding in the Balkans throughout the fourteenth centuries. In the meantime, the Ottoman state was slowly absorbing other principalities in western and central Anatolia, but it had not passed a real sovereignty and

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<sup>385</sup> Karateke, H. and Reinkowski, M. (eds.) (2005) *Legitimizing the Order: The Ottoman Rhetoric of State Power*, Leiden and Boston: Brill.

legitimacy test in the Turkish Islamic realm. Modern accounts of Ottoman history usually follow the traditional Ottoman perspective and consider 1299 as the founding date of the Ottoman state, yet there is a certain degree of ambiguity in such identification. Certainly, no declaration of independence was made in 1299. More importantly, the Ottomans continued paying a tribute to the Ilkhanid khanate until 1335, which would render the Ottomans accepting Ilkhanid sovereignty in principle until then.

Tamerlane was the first real challenge against the Ottoman legitimacy from the Turkish and Islamic realm. He claimed legitimacy to the legacy of Genghis Khan and the remaining Turcoman principalities all supported his claim against the Ottomans. In 1402, Tamerlane defeated the Ottoman Sultan Bayezid I and captured him. It appeared as if the situation in Anatolia had returned to what it had been some 100 years ago, with all the old Turcoman principalities being reincarnated. However, after a brief interregnum period, the Ottomans were able to reassert themselves in Anatolia thanks to their base in the Balkans, which was not affected by the power struggle in Anatolia.

The Ottoman expansion surged once again. This time, it was knocking on Constantinople's door. Now, the Ottoman sultans began claiming that they were the heirs to the legacy of the eastern Roman Empire, the Byzantium. Granted they were powerful enough to take over the ancient seat of the Roman Empire, were they noble enough and cultured enough to do so?

Hence, we see that legitimacy became a serious issue for the Ottomans from the beginning of the fifteenth century onwards, more than a century after they emerged. The Ottoman expansion in the Balkans did not create much problem with respect to legitimacy, since they were imposing their will in that theatre against second grade opponents: the semi-independent Byzantine city rulers, the Bulgarian king, or the Serbian king. However, when the Ottomans began conflict against Turcoman principalities in Anatolia that were more established than them, they hit the legitimacy problem. Secondly, when the Ottomans became powerful enough to besiege Constantinople and actually take it, they suddenly entered the imperial league. Under these conditions, their humble origins became a problem. How could a ruler, whose lineage did not go back to a great emperor or king, but to a minor Turcoman fighter, claim that he could rule over princes and kings, and become the emperor himself?

At this stage, the story or history of the House of Osman had to be told in a way that explained its success as well as giving legitimacy to its rule. Throughout the fifteenth century, the Ottoman sultans became patrons of poets, writers, and scholars, who could produce works to glorify them. These authors all looked up to the ancient Persian literary tradition, and equated the Ottoman rulers with the likes of Nushirevan, Cyrus, or Alexander the Great. Yet, besides these works of



high culture, we have some others whose audience was common folk. It is not hard to imagine a gifted storyteller by a campfire in a military expedition, telling the soldiers the heroic deeds of the early Ottoman sultans, and glorifying them.

These written sources contain many clues into the discursive strategies that the Ottomans had employed, yet they were not the only method available. The Ottoman sultans built mosques, madrasas, caravanserais, public kitchens.<sup>386</sup> They granted land and bestowed tax exemption to renowned Sufi sheiks to establish Sufi convents throughout the Ottoman realm, who in their turn, prayed for the generosity of the Ottoman sultans. Let us now have a closer look at the stories these chronicles tell about the rise of the Ottomans, and see how these stories compare with those told for Mustafa Kemal.

### *Legitimation through Authorisation*

One of the earliest references to the ancestors of Osman, the eponymous founder of the Ottoman dynasty, mention Süleyman Shah, who led his tribe from Central Asia to eastern Anatolia during the great dislocation caused by the Mongols in early thirteenth century. According to one story, Süleyman Shah and his men came across two armies in battle. When they saw that one army far surpassed the other in numbers, they decided to help the smaller army, in accordance with the old Turkish custom to help the weak and the needy. With their help, the smaller army triumphed, which turned out to be a Seljuk army, and the defeated larger army was a Mongol army. As a reward, the Seljuk sultan gave Süleyman Shah an area near the modern Turkish-Syrian border to settle. This story may or may not be historically accurate, but what matters for our purposes is that it portrays the proto-Ottomans as a people honouring the ancient custom and not bowing to a strong but illegitimate power. It also establishes that the Ottomans had always been in the service of the Seljuks, hence they were not usurers of power.

According to a story told in the Ottoman chronicles, after the military successes of Osman against the Byzantines, the Seljuk Sultan Alaeddin sent Osman Gazi a standard and drums, which were symbols associated with civil administrators and military commanders. This way, the Seljuk sultan was recognising the services of Osman, while giving him a certain degree of autonomy and sovereignty. That Sultan Alaeddin died at least 50 years before Osman Gazi was active, and hence

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<sup>386</sup> Crane, H. (1991) "The Ottoman Sultan's Mosques: Icons of Imperial Legitimacy," *The Ottoman City and its Parts: Urban Structure and Social Order*, I.A. Bierman, R. A. Abou-El-Haj, and D. Preziosi (eds.), New York: New Rochelle, pp. 173-243; Karateke, H.T. (2001) "Interpreting Monuments: Charitable Buildings, Monuments, and the Construction of Collective Memory in the Ottoman Empire," *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes*, pp. 183-199; cited in Karateke, H.T. and M. Reinkowski (2005) "Introduction," *Legitimizing the Order: The Ottoman Rhetoric of State Power*, Karateke, H. and Reinkowski, M. (eds.), Leiden and Boston: Brill, p. 4, f.n. 7.

such an encounter was historically impossible, is immaterial here. What matters is that these stories underline the Ottoman need for legitimacy, and they provide the shortest path towards that goal via legitimisation through authorisation. Just as arguing for extraterrestrial origins of life on Earth does not answer the question “How did life arise?” but transfers it elsewhere, legitimisation through authorisation simply bypasses the legitimacy question, and does not eliminate it. However, since we are dealing with a situation in which we are taking granted the legitimacy of the authorising authority, and looking at the “exception,” that should not cause an issue.

When we look at Mustafa Kemal, we see that he used this strategy in the period 1919-1922, during which period he was careful to pledge allegiance to the sultan and the caliph, even when the sultan had issued orders for his arrest and the grand mufti had issued a death fatwa against him. In the summer of 1919, we find Mustafa Kemal signing letters as ‘honourary aide de camp of the sultan’ and proudly wearing the associated insignia. In his *Grand Speech* of 1927, Mustafa Kemal explains that all these overtures to the sultan and to the religious sensibilities of the people were tactics necessary to protect the ‘national secret,’ that is, his plans to radically change Turkey after the victory, which he kept strictly confidential save for a few close friends. Nevertheless, this does not change the fact that without the legitimacy afforded by these tactics, Mustafa Kemal would not have been able to convince the people for the legitimacy of his actions.

The crucial point here is that Mustafa Kemal was largely relying on legitimisation through authorisation in the period 1919-1923, during which his authority had not acquired an invincible status. Especially in the First Parliament in 1920-1923, there were many vocal opponents against him, some of whom were articulating positions that took elements from the traditional Ottoman Turkish Islamic discourse as well as from the liberal democratic principles of the west. The important point is that Mustafa Kemal *had not* started a political movement after setting foot in Samsun in May 1919 by articulating his secularising reform agenda of the post 1923 period at the time. If he did, he would not have been able to come to power, a fact he himself acknowledges in his *Grand Speech*, but then, he places the blame in the strong position of the reactionary forces in the country.

This is also the origin of Mustafa Kemal’s “national secret,” that is, the necessity of hiding his true intent until his power was strong enough to fend off any opposition or challenge. It is also the basis of the guardianship of the Kemalist elites over the people, until they are *liberated* from the shackles of backwardness and ignorance. However, such liberation never takes place as long as there are people who fail to appreciate the greatness of Mustafa Kemal and who take positions that are heretical to Kemalism. Hence, the Kemalists’ argument becomes a circular one. People will be given the liberty to exercise their free will in elections *only* if they are educated. What is

the criterion to determine that the general level of education in the country has indeed risen and the superstitions and backward beliefs have been thrown away? According to the Kemalists, this can only happen once everyone accepts Kemalism as a whole, which means that they will vote for the Kemalists. In other words, if people are not voting for the Kemalists, this can mean one and only one thing: they are still ignorant and backwards!

Yet, we find him acknowledging the significance of the caliphate as late as April 1923, pledging allegiance to the caliph in the final sentence of the second article of the famous Nine Principles (*Dokuz Umde*): ‘The office of caliphate, which rests on the Turkish Grand National Assembly, is an exalted post among the Muslims.’<sup>387</sup> The Nine Principles were declared after the first parliament dissolved itself and elections were called, and they are conventionally taken by historians as the principles on which the People’s Party would be established in September 1923. The lateness of this declaration might be better appreciated if we remember that it was five months *after* the abolition of sultanate, and nearly a year *before* the abolition of caliphate.

When we compare this declaration with the rest of the Nine Principles, we see that there is a double discourse in operation. The document in general is a declaration against absolute monarchy, especially the “Oriental Despotic” form found in the Ottoman Empire.<sup>388</sup> That is the modernising discourse of Kemalism, whose understanding of “secularism” is an attack against the Ottoman Turkish tradition, under the general signifier of Islam. However, since at that time, the Kemalists were not powerful enough to declare such an all-out war, they reluctantly included this nod towards the caliphate as a concession. Hence, this double discourse appears to be different from the others in that the pledge of loyalty to the caliph at this stage was clearly not a sincere statement, and was placed only to appease concerns that the country was moving towards a radical transformation.

Furthermore, we are informed by Kazım Karabekir, who had been the commander of the eastern army in 1919 and whose acceptance of Mustafa Kemal’s leadership after his resignation from the military determined Mustafa Kemal’s fate, about a memorandum Mustafa Kemal issued to the branches of the Association for the Defence of Rights of Anatolia and Rumelia throughout the country to explain the Nine Principles. This memorandum goes even further than the brief statement in the second article, and talks about the spiritual importance of caliphate in a highly reverential tone:

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<sup>387</sup> Armağan, M. (2007) *Efsaneler ve Gerçekler*, İstanbul: Timaş, pp. 160-161.

<sup>388</sup> I have discussed how the Orientalist discourse viewed the Ottoman political system as “Oriental Despotism,” and how it affected the Kemalist discourse in Chapter One. In Chapter Two, I have then discussed how the Kemalist discourse viewed Abdulhamid II as the last concrete example to an “Oriental Despot” and compared him with Mustafa Kemal, who gave the principle of national sovereignty to Turkey.

'In the religion of Islam all prayers are performed in congregation. There is a head of congregation, to whom the individual members of the congregation are bound. This way, the *imam* (head of congregation in prayer) becomes the symbol of congregation. ... Apart from this, there is this great solidarity in Islam that makes the whole *ummah* a single soul and this happens when all the *imams* obey a high *imam* in a spiritual manner. Hence, those [high] *imams* are called caliph. ... For that reason, the whole Muslim world is interested in the issue of caliphate. If there isn't any post of caliph in the world, the world of Islam will see itself as scattered and miserable. ... For that reason the Grand National Assembly of Turkey has made his excellency the Caliph himself as the resting point of the sacred and venerable post.'<sup>389</sup>

This declaration in favour of caliphate in the Nine Principles and the subsequent reverential remarks in the related memorandum are one of many aspects of the period's history that has been censored in the Kemalist discourse. For starters, Mustafa Kemal refers to it in his Grand Speech of 1927 in a single sentence: 'We have also pointed out that the office of caliphate *may be* an office that belongs to the world of Islam as a whole.'<sup>390</sup> Şevket Süreyya Aydemir's three volume biography of Atatürk, *Tek Adam* (The Sole Man), which is a well-regarded work in Turkey among the Kemalist circles, gives the full text of the Nine Principles, but simply omits the sentence in question.<sup>391</sup>

When David Beetham is comparing the legitimization process in liberal democracies with those found in other systems, he notes, 'What is distinctive about liberal democracy is that the process through which consent is conferred –popular election– is the same as that through which political authority is appointed in the first place, whereas in all other systems the expression of consent *follows* the process of appointment to office, which is determined by other means (heredity, priestly selection, inner-party choice, self-appointment, etc.). So it would be more accurate to say that it is the popular *authorisation* of government, rather than popular *consent* to it, that is the distinctive feature of liberal-democratic legitimization.' From this perspective, the trouble with Kemalism becomes easier to identify: in the Kemalist logic, authority and legitimacy precede people's consent, in chronological, logical, and discursive forms.

This brings us to the observation that monarchy as a regime may be considered as another example of legitimization through authorisation. When a monarch passes away and a new monarch is crowned, the new monarch can be considered as having been authorised by the old monarch, through the blood relation between the two, or through the prior declaration of the new

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<sup>389</sup> Armağan, M. (2007) *Efsaneler ve Gerçekler*, p. 161.

<sup>390</sup> Atatürk, M. K. (1981) *A Speech delivered by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk 1927*, Second printing of the 1963 edition, Ankara: Başbakanlık Basımevi, p. 599. This is my translation from the original Turkish, and the italics are mine, too. The official translation is as follows: 'Alluding to the Caliphate, we added that this could be an authority common to all Mohamedans.'

<sup>391</sup> Aydemir, Ş.S. (1966) *Tek Adam*, İstanbul: Remzi Yay., Cited in Armağan, M. (2007) *Efsaneler ve Gerçekler*.

monarch as the official (and hence legitimate) heir. In Europe, the emergence of republican ideals and the articulation of popular sovereignty took many centuries, taking divergent paths in different European countries, and going through countless twists, turns, and setbacks. In Turkey, the transformation happened in the span of just about three years. In 1922, the parliament in Ankara and Mustafa Kemal himself were paying their respects to the sultan-caliph. By 1925, both the sultanate and the caliphate were gone. The remarkable point is that after that date, despite the endless Kemalist attempts to portray any opposition as reactionary movements, there was nearly no public discussion on the sultanate and caliphate, and there were almost no calls for their restoration.

### *Legitimacy through Divine Sanction*

In medieval Western Europe, rulers always acknowledged 'a higher authority than themselves 'in the form of God' and, by extension, the Pope God's earthly representative.<sup>392</sup> In general, sovereignty in a monarchy is assumed to derive from God in the final instance. Just as God was the all powerful lord of the heavens, there had to be a king who was the sovereign ruler of his realm.

In the ancient Turkish tradition, going all the way back to the steppes of Central Asia, a similar thinking existed, which regarded earthly power as a divine gift. In the ancient Turkish political tradition, the rulers were conventionally taken to receive their sovereignty from God, but a very important feature of this tradition from the perspective of our analysis was that there was no established procedure of succession. Once a ruler died, every prince in the royal family had the right to claim the throne. There was no tradition for crown prince. This was based on the belief that in the final instance, earthly power was a divine favour. Even the Ottomans had difficulty changing this practice, which went on until late sixteenth century. On a different note, the Ottoman chronicles told the story of Osman's dream, which was a sign that the Ottoman dynasty was granted this divine favour. In Turkish, the word for state, *devlet*, also meant divine favour. In Mustafa Kemal's case, similar stories were told. According to one, he was miraculously saved at Dardanelles from a bullet thanks to a pocketwatch that was hanging just over his heart. Moreover, his physical features, his blonde hair and blue eyes, which were uncommon in Turkey and which were usually associated with metaphysical power of the gaze, were considered as signs that he was an extraordinary person.

In summary, one of the most important legitimization arguments in the Kemalist discourse is that due to his larger-than-life, and almost divine attributes, Atatürk deserved to rule Turkey, and by

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<sup>392</sup> Heywood, A. (1999) *Political Theory: An Introduction*, Basingstoke: Palgrave, p. 90.

extension, Kemalism continues to be the only legitimate ideology and political movement that deserves not only to rule Turkey but to exist.

### *Kemalist Legitimation and Secularism?*

The crucial insight in the above section is that justifying legitimacy by divine sanction is just another way of legitimacy through authorisation, which we have discussed in the previous subsection. When considered carefully deeply, the legitimation problem looks more and more similar to the efforts of theologians who tried to ‘prove’ God’s existence by a philosophical consideration of the ultimate actor, or the “prime mover of things” found at the end of every cause-and-effect chain. A frequently given example in this argument involves a (nearly) infinitely long train of wagons. If you look at an arbitrary wagon and ask yourself who is making it move, you will first come across the wagon immediately before it, and then the wagon before that, which goes this way so on and so forth. The argument goes, there *must be* a special wagon at the very front of this train, which may appear to be pulling just the wagon next to it, but by way of causality, it is in fact responsible for moving all the wagons in the train. This wagon is so special that it merits having a name of its own, say, *locomotive*.

My main argument here is that the most important legitimation strategies employed by Kemalism are *in direct conflict* with its claim as the champion of secularism (in the proper sense of the term, not in the way used by the Kemalists). Kemalism does not try to base its legitimacy on the desacralisation of the political. It simply tries to put itself in the place formerly occupied by Islam.

I would like to explain what I mean by ‘desacralisation of the political.’ In an introductory article on legitimacy, William Connolly categorises the ‘contemporary theories of legitimacy’ into three groups.<sup>393</sup> The first group of these theories that ‘try to restore aspects of the world we have lost, interpreting the customs and norms of the order as traditions touched by divinity or reflective of a purpose immanent in nature.’ Although Kemalism’s attitude towards the Ottoman Turkish tradition is exactly the opposite of this description, its emphasis on the supernatural and mystical aspects of Mustafa Kemal’s ascension to power compels us to place Kemalism within this category. Such a categorisation is further emboldened when Hannah Arendt’s statement that these theories attempt to ‘restore a doctrine of “legitimacy” [that] derives from something outside the human deeds.’<sup>394</sup> Again, this seems to fit into Kemalism.

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<sup>393</sup> Connolly, W.E. (1991) “Legitimacy,” *Blackwell Encyclopedia of Political Thought*, pp. 279-280.

<sup>394</sup> Arendt, H. (1958) “What was authority?” in *Nomos I: Authority*, C. Friedrich (ed.), Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, p. 82; Quoted in Connolly, W.E. (1991) “Legitimacy,” p. 279.

The second group of legitimacy theories ‘acknowledge the conventional character of modern life but then try to limit the question of legitimacy to those conventions that govern the relation of the citizen to the state, and to secure that legitimacy through the rational consent of citizens.’ Connolly then illustrates these theories by giving the example of George Kateb, for whom ‘modernity represents the *desacralisation* of nature, the conventionalisation of life, the crystallisation of the state, and the primacy of the consenting agent in bestowing legitimacy, but the question of legitimacy is to be restricted to the consent of the citizen to the basic constitutional principles governing the state.’<sup>395</sup>

In traditional, premodern societies, it was God who made the sun to rise and then set every day, who made the rain, and who ripened the harvest. Because of this divine intervention, everything in nature gained a sacred aspect. The same could be said for man and society. With the advent of modernity, divine laws running the universe were replaced by the laws of physics, and this corresponds to the ‘desacralisation of nature.’ I argue that secularism in its original, western meaning refers to the desacralisation of the political, that is, putting politics, political relations, political antagonisms, political concepts-in short, the political, in a framework that is not defined with respect to a divine being, but defined with respect to man. For me, this is the fundamental quality of secularism in the West, whose roots as a long historical process definitely go as far back as the Enlightenment, and may be traced even further back to the Renaissance and the Reformation eras.

Despite all the seemingly radical aspects of the Kemalist reforms, we see that such a conceptual modernisation (or westernization) has never been attempted in Turkey and the political still carries a sacred character. The first paragraph of the Preamble to the 1982 Constitution provides an excellent illustration of this point:

‘This Constitution, which defines the eternal existence of the Turkish Homeland and the Turkish Nation and the indivisible unity of the Exalted Turkish State, in accordance with the understanding of nationalism determined by Atatürk, the founder of the Republic of Turkey, immortal leader and unrivalled hero, and in accordance with His reforms and principles, ...’<sup>396</sup>

I must note that this is my translation, which is faithful to the Turkish original down to the capitalisations. The following is the official translation:

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<sup>395</sup> Kateb, G. (1984) “On the legitimization crisis,” in *Legitimacy and the State*, W.E. Connolly (ed.), Oxford: Blackwell; New York: SUNY Press, p. 180. Quoted in Connolly, W.E. (1991) “Legitimacy,” p. 280. The emphasis is mine.

<sup>396</sup> The Turkish text with the latest amendments is available online at many public websites, including the Constitutional Court. <http://www.anayasa.gov.tr/index.php?l=template&id=188&lang=0> (Last accessed 28 February 2010).

'In line with the concept of nationalism and the reforms and principles introduced by the founder of the Republic of Turkey, Atatürk, the immortal leader and the unrivalled hero, this Constitution, which affirms the eternal existence of the Turkish nation and motherland and the indivisible unity of the Turkish state, embodies,'<sup>397</sup>

At first sight, the two versions may appear the same, but there are minor deviations from the Turkish original, which are crucial to my argument. Firstly, the official version loses the capitalisation of 'nation,' 'motherland' and 'state' found in the original text. Because of the grammatical construction of the sentence, capitalisation of third person pronoun referring to Atatürk, 'His,' is also lost. However, the most glaring omission is that the 'Turkish State' is preceded with the adjective 'Exalted' (again capitalised) in the Turkish original, which simply disappears in the official translation.

The constitution of Turkey is a document that constructs the state, the nation, and the motherland as sacred and eternal concepts, as well as sanctifying Atatürk. Remarkably, one of the frequent ways of referring to the state in the Ottoman times was 'the state that will last until eternity' (*devlet-i ebed-müddet*). In the Ottoman period, Islam and tradition defined the political, whereas in the republican period, they were replaced by the icon of Atatürk and Kemalism.

### *The Right of Sword*

The most important strategy employed by the Ottoman chronicles is the concept of the "right of sword." Again, according to a story, told in the famous Ottoman chronicle, Asikpasazade, when Osman Gazi conquered the Karacahisar castle, someone told him that he had to send some of the spoils of the conquest to the Seljuk sultan in Konya, as a show of allegiance and recognition of his sovereignty. Osman Gazi was angry with this proposition and he responded, "If he claims that his ancestors go back to the Kinik tribe of the Oguz, I say, I am descended from the Kayi tribe, which has seniority. If his ancestors had conquered Anatolia, I say, I conquered this castle by my sword. If Seljuk sultan wants a piece, then let him come here, and take it by force." Interestingly, a copy of this chronicle printed in late nineteenth century is found at the presidential library in Ankara and this passage is underlined by Atatürk himself, and he placed exclamation marks next to it.

In 1922, when the abolition of the sultanate was being debated at the parliament, those debates took longer than expected, and Mustafa Kemal made a famous statement at the parliament: 'Gentlemen, neither the sovereignty nor the right to govern [the sultanate] can be transferred to

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<sup>397</sup> The English translation is available online at the website of the Directorate General of Press and Information. <http://www.byegm.gov.tr/sayfa.aspx?Id=78> (Last accessed 28 February 2010).



by one person to anybody else by an academic debate. Sovereignty is acquired by force, by power and by violence. It was by violence that the sons of Osman acquired the power to rule over the Turkish nation and to maintain their rule for more than six centuries. It is now the nation that revolts against these usurpers, puts them in their right place and actually carries on their own sovereignty. This is an actual fact. It is no longer a question of knowing whether we want to leave this sovereignty in the hands of the nation or not. It is simply a question of stating an actuality, something which is already an accomplished fact and which must be accepted unconditionally as such. And this must be done at any price. If those who are assembled here, the Assembly and everybody else, would find this quite natural, it would be very appropriate from my point of view. Conversely, the reality will nevertheless be manifested in the necessary form, but in that event it is possible that some heads will be cut off.’<sup>398</sup>

Here, Mustafa Kemal was clearly referring to the right of the sword.

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It is true that the last sultan, Mehmed VI Vahideddin declared the national liberation movement a rebellion, declared its leaders rebels, and stipulated death penalty for them, Mustafa Kemal being at the forefront. It is true that he had collaborated with the occupying Allied powers and sent an army against the national resistance forces when those forces were battling against the Greek occupation. The Kemalists regarded these acts as sufficient ground to consider him a traitor, and although many people might have agreed with the Kemalists, they were certainly far from constituting a healthy majority. Yet, after the abolition of the caliphate in March 1924, *all* members of the Ottoman Dynasty, including women and children, were sent to exile, despite the fact that some Ottoman princes had been openly supportive of the resistance movement, and some even travelled to Anatolia to join it, only to be refused by Mustafa Kemal. Right after the victory against the Greeks, Mustafa Kemal had begun speaking against the whole Ottoman dynasty, accusing it for being selfish and ignorant of its subjects and finding it responsible for all the calamities the nation had faced for centuries. Vilifying the Ottoman past as a whole became one of the central elements of the Kemalist discourse. Indeed, the degree to which the vilification of the Ottoman past was accepted in the public opinion can be used as an indicator of the degree to which people wholly embraced Kemalism.

These issues are also related to the sovereignty discussion below. I would like to emphasize that Kemalism places a premium in holding the power exclusively in its hands. Hence, it focuses on legitimising its accession to power, but does not make further efforts to justify the continuation of its rule. Furthermore, because Kemalism rests its legitimacy on ‘the right of sword,’ it cannot

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<sup>398</sup> Atatürk, M. K. (1981) *A Speech delivered by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk 1927*, p. 577.

come to terms in a political environment where it can be criticised, or even toppled from power. In other words, Kemalism refuses to engage with opposition in a non-violent way. It simply says: 'We have taken power by force, we have spilled blood for it, and we will only give it away that way.'

### *Recognition by the West as a Source of Legitimacy*

When we look at the Kemalist discourse, we detect a rather peculiar legitimization process in operation in the frequent references to the recognition of Mustafa Kemal as a victorious commander, eminent statesman, and visionary reformist, and praise for the (apparently) outstanding transformation of Turkey from its ignorant 'Oriental' Ottoman past to its enlightened, modernised and westernized Kemalist present, in the West.

This legitimization works in two distinct ways. Firstly, from what Hasan Bülent Kahraman would call as the 'internalized Orientalism' perspective of Kemalism, the West represents the highest level of contemporary civilisation, whose character is considered as being universal in the Kemalist discourse. It then follows that western observers of Turkey, namely, journalists, travellers, statesmen, and diplomats, would be honest in their verdict on the country. If they regard Mustafa Kemal highly, consider his career as an extraordinary success story, and praise his reforms, then it shows the rightness of his path. It means he *deserves* to be the ruler of Turkey. On the other hand, the second line of reasoning goes, weren't the western powers plotting to divide up Turkey among themselves and drive the Turks all the way back to the steppes of Asia up until the signing of the Lausanne Treaty in 1923? This comes from the particularistic strain of Kemalist discourse, which is more introverted and looks at the west with suspicion. Recognition by the West is then transformed from an honest, friendly testimony into one that is forced to accept, or cannot deny Mustafa Kemal's greatness. This time, Mustafa Kemal's power is legitimised because even the west, which had been 'our enemy' and whose friendship is never certain, is *forced* to give him due credit, and this is a victory of Kemalism.

Thus, for example, the famous march celebrating the tenth anniversary of the republic refers to Mustafa Kemal as 'the commander in chief who is *respected* by the whole world.' (Italics mine). The Turkish verb emphasized here is *saymak*, respect for a higher authority or a more powerful figure, as opposed to *sevmek*, love towards those at a lower rank, be it in a government hierarchy or in a family setting. Another frequently used testimony of Mustafa Kemal's greatness in the Kemalist discourse is by Lloyd George, the British Prime Minister, whose support for the Greeks in the conflict cost him dearly in his political career. After the Greek defeat in 1922, he reportedly addressed parliament and found his excuse as follows: 'The centuries rarely produce a genius. It

was our bad luck that that great genius of our era was granted to the Turkish nation.’<sup>399</sup> It is implied that if, even Lloyd George, who had been the enemy’s prime minister, admitted Mustafa Kemal’s genius, then something must have been wrong with all those discordant voices in Turkey, who still dared to criticise him or his reforms.

When newspapers proudly cited stories and articles that appeared in the foreign press on the achievements of the republican regime during the celebrations of the republic’s tenth anniversary in 1933, both the universalist and particularist logics were in operation, and they both worked towards legitimising the Kemalist rule. The universalist logic used the fact that Mustafa Kemal had earned the respect of the West, which would be seen as the ultimate arbiter on such matters, to argue that his rule, and hence Kemalism’s rule, was legitimate. The particularist logic emphasized the unique personality of Mustafa Kemal to argue that he and only he could have saved the country; hence he alone deserves to rule Turkey. Similarly, after Atatürk’s death on 10 November 1938, newspapers were full of eulogies published throughout the world after him. It should not come as a surprise that excerpts from the foreign press published in the Turkish newspapers only contained the positive evaluations.

## **From Gazi to Atatürk: Legitimacy as Hegemony through the Titles of Mustafa Kemal**

### *The Contested Meanings of Gazi from the Empire to the Republic*

At this point, it is worth making a digression into the layers of meanings that the concept of *gazi* and *gaza* acquired during the late Ottoman and early Republican periods, but to do that, we first need to look at the origins of these terms. In Turkish, the title *gazi* denotes a veteran, that is, a brave soldier who fought courageously in war and returned from the battlefield alive. When a mother sent her son to war, she would customarily tell him ‘If you die, you will be a *şehit* (martyr), and if you survive, you will be a *gazi*.’ Besides this common usage of *gazi* with a small g, *Gazi* as an honorary title with capital G was given to victorious commanders. The early Ottoman rulers, Osman Gazi and Orhan Gazi being the first two, and their companions were all called Gazi.

*Gazi* is the name given to a person who undertakes *gaza*, which is similar to *jihad* but perhaps a little narrower in scope. Needless to say, all of these terms are of Arabic and Islamic origin. In the world of the early Ottomans, *gaza* played a significant role-the military expeditions against the Byzantine lands were all called as such. *Gaza* was war conducted for the purpose of glorifying the name of God (*ila-yı kelimetullah*) in the world. The ‘holy war’ dimensions of the Ottoman

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<sup>399</sup> Özakman, T. (2005) *Şu Çılgın Türkler*, İstanbul: Bilgi.

expansion into the Balkans would later be highlighted even further throughout fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, when armies would be raised throughout Europe against the Ottomans under the crusading banner. For example, Christian knights from as far away as England had fought at the Battle of Nicopolis in 1396.

There are several points that are worth making here, with respect to the relevance of *gaza* and *gazis* in the late Ottoman and early Republican periods. Firstly, in accordance with the Pan-Ottomanism policies, the memory of the early Ottomans, which had been forgotten to a large extent, was revived in late nineteenth century, especially during the reign of Abdülhamid II. The tombs of Osman Gazi and his son Orhan Gazi in Bursa were restored, and annual ceremonies were held at the small town of Sogut, which was regarded as the birthplace of the Ottomans. Abdülhamid II established a corps of imperial guards from the nomadic tribe of Karakeçili, which were considered to belong to the same Turkish clan as the early Ottomans, the Kayi clan. A battle ship was named after Osman Gazi's father, Ertuğrul, which is famous for its cordial visit to Japan and its tragic sinking on the return trip.

The second point that is worth making is that the origins of the Ottomans were questioned for the first time from an 'academic'<sup>400</sup> point of view in 1916 when a Robert College teacher, H. A. Gibbons (not to be confused with the famous historian of the decline and fall of the Roman Empire, Edward Gibbon) published a book, in which he advanced a number of quite controversial claims.<sup>401</sup> That the Ottoman Empire was living its final days, while its origins were put under the academic microscope, is ironic in itself.

Gibbons claimed that the early Ottomans had come to Anatolia as pagans and they converted to Islam at a relatively late age. Gibbons was inclined to view the early Ottomans' conversion to Islam as a purely functional and interest-driven affair, in a way echoing the conversion of Emperor Constantine to Christianity in early fourth century. Just as Constantine's conversion to Christianity did not mean him denying the other gods, but simply acknowledging the supremacy of the Christian God, Gibbons' depiction of the role of Islam in the early Ottoman polity regarded it as the centre of a 'enterprise association,' to use Oakeshott's terminology.<sup>402</sup>

The most controversial aspect of Gibbons' theory was that he overemphasized the role of Greek converts, symbolised in Köse Mihal, who had become a trusted companion of Osman Gazi.<sup>403</sup> For

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<sup>400</sup> Here, I am using *academic* in the Western sense of an organised enterprise with its education and career system, language, set of problems, down to the meticulous details of giving credit where credit is due through citation. It is certainly a discourse in its own right.

<sup>401</sup> Gibbons, H.A. (1916) *The Foundation of the Ottoman Empire*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.

<sup>402</sup> Flathman, R.E. (2007) "Legitimacy," in *A Companion to Contemporary Political Philosophy*, R. Goodin, P. Pettit and T. Pogge (eds.), 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., Vol. 2, and Oxford: Blackwell, p. 680.

<sup>403</sup> Interestingly, a descendant of Kose Mihal would publish a book in the republican period, in which he claimed that his ancestors were not Greek but a people whose presence in Anatolia had been older than

Gibbons, the Turkish element provided the raw muscle, while the Greek converts were responsible for all the military and political intellect that fuelled the Ottoman expansion. A few years earlier, the famous historian Lybyer had argued along similar lines in his study *Süleyman I*, whose reign in mid sixteenth century is considered as the zenith of Ottoman power. Lybyer looked back in the Byzantine period, and found precedents for almost all great Ottoman institutions, with the conclusion that the Ottoman civilisation had been nothing but Greek and Byzantine in disguise. Hence, just years before a Greek army landed in Izmir and began its Asia Minor adventure, scholars such as Lybyer and Gibbons were even denying the Ottoman Turks the glory of victory against Byzantium. If the Greeks themselves had been responsible for falling under the 'Turkish yoke,' the logic would follow, they had the power to get rid of it.

The theories of Gibbons and Lybyer would be considered in today's milieu in Turkey as Orientalist, since their work in effect amounted to moving the 'impenetrable barrier' between the Orient and the Occident six centuries back in time. A proper response to these theories about the origins of the Ottomans would only come in the 1930s, by Paul Wittek and Fuat Köprülü. Köprülü had already published an important book on the contributions of the Sufi mystics to the Turkish literature in Anatolia, and in the two conferences he gave at Sorbonne in Paris in 1934, he argued forcefully that these Sufi mystics were influential in inspiring the early Ottomans towards the path of the *gaza*. Paul Wittek, on the other hand, had served as an officer in the German army in World War I, after which he took up professorship in London at SOAS. He published his influential book *The Rise of the Ottoman Empire* in 1938. Wittek formulated the famous *gaza thesis* in this book, which he regarded as the driving ideology of the Ottoman expansion.<sup>404</sup>

Since Gibbons was not as knowledgeable as Wittek and Köprülü regarding the early Turkish sources in Anatolia, his theory of the early Ottomans was quickly pushed back and the Wittek-Köprülü paradigm with an emphasis on *gaza* ideology remained the conventional wisdom for nearly half a century. The question of the origins of the Ottomans nearly vanished from the historians' agenda.

From the late 1980s, interest in Ottoman history in Turkey exploded in a most surprising way and the question of the Ottoman origins returned in full force. In 1998, the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the declaration of the republic was celebrated amid the highly polarised public debate surrounding the increased visibility of Islam in the public sphere, one of the manifestations of which was the fact that the Islamist-leaning Welfare Party had been the number one party in the 1995 elections.

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the spread of the Greek culture in Anatolia by fifth century BC. With reference to the ancient stories about the Asiatic origin of the people of Troy, as well as the so-called 'Turkish history thesis,' which regarded the indigenous people of Anatolia to have emigrated from Central Asia, he then claimed that he was an 'authentic' Turk!

<sup>404</sup> Kafadar, C. (1995) *Between Two Worlds: The Construction of the Ottoman State*, Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 29-59.

The anniversary was also an occasion for a general assessment of the successes and ‘not-so’ successes of the republic, but unlike the 1930s, it proved harder to dismiss the Ottoman period as complete failure. The next year, on the other hand, was celebrated as the 700<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the foundation of the Ottoman Empire, which fuelled interest in the Ottoman past to ever higher levels.

In some ways, the rising interest in the Ottoman past from the 1990s onwards may be linked to the rising visibility of Islam in the public sphere, and especially the rising popular support for the Islamist-leaning parties. But then, at the same time, there was a revival of Kemalism in Turkey in the same period. After the 1980 coup, what may be termed a conservative and right-wing interpretation of Kemalism was pushed forward by the military leaders and came to be the official Kemalism. It was actually called Atatürkism (*Atatürkçülük*) to distinguish it from Kemalism, which had been ‘tainted’ by the left-leaning Kemalists as a radical, revolutionary ideology. As official ideologies go, this Atatürkism was very dry, very state-centred, and it was not suitable to be embraced by the masses.

At the same time, there were those, who called themselves as the ‘real Kemalists,’ who mostly situated themselves in the leftist camp of the political spectrum, from the ‘left of the middle’ positions of the RPP of the 1970s to the socialist-leaning supporters of the YÖN-Devrim movement, and these ‘real Kemalists’ harshly criticised the state sponsored Atatürkism. Nevertheless, as long as the Cold War raged, and Turkey shared a land border with the Soviet Union, any leftist discourse that failed to openly condemn communism did not stand a chance of wide popular support.

Once the Soviet threat was over, however, it was an entirely new era. Those who had been calling themselves as socialists abandoned that discourse in just a few years and branded themselves as Kemalists. This new wave of Kemalism was staunchly nationalist, anti-imperialist, anti-American, and anti-democratic. Hence, an unexpected ‘coalition’ between the old foes of the 1970s was born under the banner of Kemalism. Groups which clashed violently in the 1970s, such as the left-wing Workers Party (Maoist) and the right wing nationalists joined forces against a coalition of liberals and Islamists.

The above paragraph shows that it is not an easy task to answer ‘Who are the Kemalists?’ at a given time in Turkey, because many different groups profess to be Kemalist at the same time, and those who would normally be expected to be critical of Kemalism and to position themselves out of the Kemalist camp cannot openly do so. More importantly, Kemalism as a discourse has varying degrees of penetration throughout. This is the primary reason I have been referring to Kemalism as a discourse throughout the thesis, rather than talking about Kemalism as an easily

identifiable political movement at a given time with clear links to its past and future, because when political groups and parties are in question it is very difficult to tell where Kemalism starts and where it ends. Hence, when I say there was a revival of Kemalism in the 1990s, I mean two things at the same time. Firstly, it refers to a revival of Kemalism as a discourse, but in the 1990s, it is clearly a discourse among many others. Secondly, there was a revival of Kemalism in that people and groups, who had been identifying themselves primarily with other ideologies such as socialism (but who had also been pledging loyalty to Kemalism albeit weakly), started to increasingly identify themselves primarily with Kemalism, hence a revival of Kemalism as a political current.

#### *From the Last Ottoman Gazis to Mustafa Kemal as the Sole Gazi*

After the victory against the Greeks at the Battle of Sakarya, the parliament gave the honorary title *Gazi* to Mustafa Kemal Paşa in 1921. Until his adoption of the surname Atatürk in 1934 during the “surname reform,” Gazi, or His Excellency Gazi (*Gazi Hazretleri*), would be the most common way of referring to Mustafa Kemal at the parliament, in the newspapers, and other public forums. From 1934 onwards however, this title was pushed to the background and Atatürk became the exclusive name for the founder and the first president of Turkey. In this section, I shall argue that the selection of these titles for their respective periods was significant, and it was related to the Kemalist attempt to establish its legitimacy.

As discussed above, the ‘ideology’ of gaza and the honorific title of gazi that was accorded to the Ottomans because of their occupation with gaza was prominent in the meteoric rise of the Ottoman polity from a small and insignificant principality to an empire that laid claim to the legacy of the Roman Empire. Until the end of the sixteenth century, Ottoman military expeditions were usually led by the sultans themselves, but afterwards, the sultans remained in the capital while the Ottoman armies (and the navies) went on the campaigns under the commandship of grand viziers, or other lower ranking viziers. In the nineteenth century, when the main concern of the Ottomans had become the preservation of the empire, the most famous Ottoman general to be called as Gazi was not surprisingly Osman Paşa, who had commandeered the heroic defence of Plevne (in modern Bulgaria) in the Turco-Russian War of 1877-78. There were two other Ottoman Paşas to be called as Gazi in late nineteenth century, Ahmed Muhtar Paşa and Edhem Paşa. Ahmed Muhtar Paşa received the title due to his service in the eastern front during the 1877-78 Turco-Russian War, after which Turkey lost three provinces, namely, Kars, Ardahan, and Batum,

to Russia in the east.<sup>405</sup> Edhem Paşa led the Ottoman Turkish army to victory at the Domeke battle in the 1897 Turco-Greek war in Thessaly. Though the Ottoman armies were victorious in the battlefield, that victory did not translate into any gain at the diplomatic negotiations.

The stories of these three gazis share a pattern, and afford us valuable insights into the general feeling in the country. Despite having inherited a glorious legacy, the Ottoman Turks had been on the retreat for a very long time. In the past, they were chasing conquest, but at the turn of the twentieth century, they were on the defensive. Furthermore, even if they secured victories on the battlefield with enormous sacrifice and valour, the circumstances were so unfavourable that the precious military gains, which could only be secured at great costs, were then entirely lost at the diplomatic table. When you add the disastrous defeat in World War I to all these, it is easy to see why the general public was so tired of military conflict at the beginning of the national liberation struggle. Finally, the image of Mustafa Kemal as Gazi arose under these circumstances not only as a victorious commander but as the national hero, who reversed the tide of history which had been riding against the Turks for so many centuries, and who achieved in translating military success into diplomatic success.<sup>406</sup>

During the national war for liberation, when news of the Turkish forces triumphing over the Greeks near the town of Inonu in the Eskisehir province in January 1921 reached Ankara, Mustafa Kemal, then the head of the Turkish parliament and the leader of the nationalist resistance, sent a congratulatory telegraph to the commander of the western armies, Colonel İsmet, in which he praised İsmet in the following words: 'You have not only defeated the enemy, you have reversed the misfortuned lot of the nation.' İsmet was the right hand man of Mustafa Kemal—he would be the prime minister for much of Mustafa Kemal's presidency, and then become the second president of the republic. But before these, we find Mustafa Kemal choosing İsmet to lead the Turkish delegation in the Lausanne Peace Conference. It is true that this was partly due to İsmet's unwavering loyalty to Mustafa Kemal, but it was also partly to counter the persistent fears in the country about winning the military war but losing the diplomatic one. Mustafa Kemal was sending a message to both the home audience and the great powers that the Turkish delegation at the Lausanne Conference did not represent a deferential, Oriental nation, but a proud and victorious one. This first victory was so important in İsmet's career that during the surname reform, Mustafa Kemal gave İsmet the surname İnönü, in remembrance of the battle's location.

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<sup>405</sup> Both Osman Paşa and Ahmed Muhtar Paşa was awarded the title of Gazi by a sultanic decree dated 3 October 1877. Turkish General Staff, 1877-78 Ottoman-Russian War Archives, No. 5397/2-10/684. According to a document found in this archive (No. 2073/3-16/156 and 157), dated 1 March 1877, preachers were sent throughout the eastern provinces were to call the people to join the 'gaza' efforts of the Ottoman army. The references are from the published catalogue of the archives, *Osmanlı-Rus Harbi (1877-1878) Koleksiyonu Kataloğu (ORH-VII)* (1995), Ankara: Genelkurmay Basımevi.

<sup>406</sup> In Chapter One, I have talked extensively on the 'driving the Turks out of Europe' rhetoric, and how it affected the Ottoman modernizers to see their task as a matter of survival.



The list of last Ottoman gazis from late nineteenth century does not only include these Paşas, but includes none other than his majesty Abdülhamid II. He adopted the title after the heroism of Gazi Osman Paşa at the defence of Plevna in 1877. Abdülhamid regarded the title Gazi so highly that he had it added to his imperial sign, *tughra*, even though Abdülhamid II had not personally been present during the defence of Plevna. Since he was the sovereign, he was the commander-in-chief of all Ottoman armies, hence by adopting the title, he was making a clear reference to the gazi roots of his ancestors.

In Chapter Two, I have discussed the Kemalist effort to oust the ‘justice-centred’ Ottoman Turkish political tradition and replace it with the ‘liberty-centred’ western political tradition. In the ensuing struggle to capture the public opinion, Abdülhamid II was a prominent node of contention. The Kemalist discourse portrayed him as a tyrant or Oriental Despot while the traditional and conservative discourse regarded him as a just sultan.

#### *Mustafa Kemal as Gazi*

We are now in a better position to appreciate the significance of Mustafa Kemal’s adoption of the title Gazi after the discussion above on the term. It was not just a coincidence or a natural evolution of the matter that Mustafa Kemal would be called as *Gazi* in Turkey from 1921 to 1934. That was a period in which the traumatic after effects of the abolition of the Ottoman sultanate and caliphate, which had been the source of legitimacy for centuries, were being felt throughout the country. People, who had been accustomed to shouting ‘Long live my sultan!’ in public ceremonies were compelled to renounce their loyalties and call not only the sultan but the whole Ottoman dynasty as traitors and oppressors of the nation. In such an environment, calling Mustafa Kemal as *Gazi*, which had been the prestigious titles of the early Ottoman rulers, perfectly suited the Kemalist strategy of the day and served much needed functions.

The first and the most obvious function Mustafa Kemal’s Gazi titled served was the acute need in Turkey at that time to have a hero, for Mustafa Kemal was nothing less: a national hero.<sup>407</sup> Falih Rifki Atay, who was born in the 1890s, and who had experienced his adolescent years through the tumultuous days of the second constitutional period succinctly clearly states the feelings of his generation in his writings. They had come of age while the centuries old Ottoman Empire crumbled in their eyes. In 1908, geography textbooks taught schoolchildren that lands as far apart

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<sup>407</sup> In Chapter One, I have talked about the centuries-long retreat of the Turks from their proud and victorious position at the gates of Vienna in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, to the miserable conditions of hundreds of thousands of refugees fleeing from their homes throughout the Balkans, where they had lived for centuries, to Istanbul and Anatolia. In a sense, the radicalism of Kemalism was a violent reaction against the sense of retreat and defeat against the West.

as Albania, Yemen, Lebanon, Basra, and Macedonia were part of the Ottoman homeland. Soon, these schoolchildren were recruited to the Ottoman army, and found themselves witnessing the painful retreat to Anatolia in 1918. In 1915, half the students at the Kayseri High School volunteered for Gallipoli. Many of them never returned. Under such circumstances, the image of Mustafa Kemal, determined and confident, but most importantly, who knew how to defeat the west in its own game, namely, war and diplomacy, was very much appealing. One gets the impression from the Kemalist discourse that the country needed a hero to appear, and Mustafa Kemal just slid himself into the empty throne of Gazi people had already designated in their minds. At this point, the cryptic remarks of Sultan Vahideddin to Mustafa Kemal during their last meeting before Kemal left Istanbul for Anatolia in May 1919 is worth remembering: 'All our hopes are with you.' Why would the sultan place all his 'hopes' in a chief army inspector, who was ostensibly charged with quelling the nationalist sentiments in the Black Sea region and eastern Anatolia?

More importantly, I would like to argue that Mustafa Kemal's Gazi title served to fill in any void or loss of orientation people might feel after the Ottoman dynasty was ousted from power. One might argue that the Ottoman sultans' actual power had already been curbed after the move to constitutional monarchy, but we are talking about the whole dynasty, not individual sultans, and the chief function of monarchy in the constitutional monarchy would be to serve as the locus of power and provide legitimacy to the system. In the absence of this source of legitimacy, which provided a clear link with tradition and helped instil a sense of continuity, some people might conceivably think: 'For over six centuries, we have been ruled by a line of Gazi-warrior sultans, and their rule had been the cornerstone of our lives, but now that they are gone, is the end of the world near?' The Kemalist discourse had a ready answer: 'Do not worry. The long line of the Ottoman Gazis might be gone but now we have Mustafa Kemal, *the* Gazi leading us.'

My argument is that Mustafa Kemal's adoption of the Gazi title was an important component of the Kemalist legitimization strategy. This strategy was in place even before 1921 when the title was officially given to Mustafa Kemal by the parliament. In the fall 1918, around the time the ceasefire ending the hostilities of World War I was signed, Mustafa Kemal Paşa was the commander of the retreating Ottoman armies in Syria, and he came to Adana after the ceasefire. A very interesting document, namely a photograph of Mustafa Kemal was brought to light in the last few years. Apparently, he signed the photograph for a notable person in Adana as a gift, and before his signature, he wrote the following line: 'We have made such a *gaza* that we have pleased the Prophet [Muhammad].'

It is an opportune moment for us now to think about a small but crucial difference in the western and the Turkish outlooks to the military history of World War I and the subsequent Turkish War

for National Liberation. In a recently completed PhD thesis, Edward Webber muses, ‘Kemal himself, after all, was known as ‘Gazi,’ a warrior for the faith, due to his victories over infidel forces in World War I (most famously at Gallipoli), and many volunteers were called to fight the occupying Greek and other forces after 1918 on the basis that they would liberate the captive Sultan-Caliph from the grip of the infidels occupying Istanbul.’<sup>408</sup> As I have stated above, the title Gazi was given to Mustafa Kemal by the parliament after the victory at Sakarya in autumn 1921, hence Webber’s identification of Mustafa Kemal’s Gazi title with Gallipoli is not correct. This might look like a minor error, but it is an understandable one at the same time, since Mustafa Kemal’s victory at Sakarya battle would pale in comparison to that at Gallipoli when factors such as their respective impacts on world history, the number of troops involved, and the number of casualties at both sides are taken into account. I have discussed how Kemalism’s refusal to accept contingency rendered World War I a ‘forgotten war’ in Chapter Two. In the Kemalist discourse, Gallipoli is only a short delay in the inevitable collapse of the old Ottoman order, while Sakarya is the beginning of the end of Greek occupation in western Anatolia, and the harbinger of the dawn of the Kemalist republic.

Another point I would like to make, which reflects the title of this subsection, is that during the Ottoman period, the Gazi ethos was a collective identification. It was not restricted to just the Ottoman sultans, or the Paşas. Anyone who shared the Gazi ideals could participate. On the other hand, Mustafa Kemal became the only person to be called Gazi. In other words, the concept of Gazi was taken out of the public domain and monopolized in the personality of Mustafa Kemal. I will interpret this as another example of the severe restriction Kemalism placed on the political.

### *The Rupture at the Change from Gazi to Atatürk*

The most striking aspect of this switch from Gazi to Atatürk was that it happened too quickly and uniformly. It was as if a central order, ‘From now onwards, Gazi shall be called as Atatürk’ emanated throughout the public; there was no other way for such an abrupt switch.

In the newspapers of 1933, we do not come across any reference to Mustafa Kemal as Atatürk, because the surname reform would only be carried out next year, in June 1934, and he would then be given the surname Atatürk, meaning “the father of the Turks.” Thus, historically speaking, it would not be appropriate to call him as Atatürk before 1934. Anyhow, in the newspapers of the period 1930-1933 the most frequent way to refer to Mustafa Kemal was to call him as *Gazi*, or *Gazi hazretleri*, ‘His Excellency Gazi.’ I will just illustrate this usage from the February 1933 issues

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<sup>408</sup> Webber, E. (2007) ““Civilizing Religion: Jacobin Projects of Secularization in Turkey, France, Tunisia, and Syria,” Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Pennsylvania, p. 233, f.n. 81.

of the *Hakimiyeti Milliye* newspaper: On 1 February it reports that the bust that is closest in likeness to 'the persona of Gazi' (who is later referred to as 'the Great Chief') was sculpted by an amateur. The 5 February story of Mustafa Kemal's travel to Bursa refers to him as 'the Great Gazi,' and a commentary on 8 February refers to him as 'our Gazi, who sits atop the Turkish revolution and who protects his high work, which has left the world in awe, with great love.' On 9 February, we read 'His Excellency Gazi has liked the works on language [reform].'

Indeed, I came across a small school play about the importance of using domestic products, which was apparently published just around that switch. Throughout the play, Mustafa Kemal, 'the hero who saved our country from certain obliteration' is uniformly referred to as 'Gazi,' 'our Gazi father,' or 'His Excellency Gazi.' Yet, in the 'Table of Corrections' slip, which was customarily inserted into all publications to correct minor spelling and typesetting errors, the readers of the play were called to change all those instances of 'Gazi' with 'Atatürk.'

These incidences lead us to the conclusion that calling Mustafa Kemal as Gazi or Atatürk was not the outcome of a natural process. They were both dictated from the above.

#### *The Surname Reform of 1934*

Like most reforms of the period, the 'surname reform' was carried out as a law passed in the parliament. The law required all Turkish citizens to acquire a surname. The Turkish word for surname, *soy adı*, literally translated as the 'lineage name,' hence the eldest member of a family would take a surname and all his children and grandchildren would assume the same surname. In the Kemalist discourse, the 'surname reform' is presented as one of the visible transformations Turkey underwent thanks to 'Atatürk's reforms.'

In the West, surnames are the way through which people connect with their past and form identity. In Turkey, in many cases, especially in the countryside, surnames with no historical or cultural significance were simply assigned from surname manuals by the officials to people. In many cases, people were prevented from taking their long established family or tribe names. (But such practices were not carried out to the extremes of, say, a Maoist cultural revolution) The end result is that surnames have now become yet another barrier towards reconciliation and coming to terms with the Ottoman Turkish/Islamic tradition.

The first point to be noted with respect to Mustafa Kemal's surname is that it is a unique identifier, which means that there was and will ever be only one person to carry this surname. Mustafa Kemal had a sister, named Makbule, and according to the stipulations of the surname law, she would be expected to take the same surname as his elder brother, but Atatürk was not chosen as a surname by Atatürk himself. It was given to him by the Turkish Grand National Assembly in a specific act of law. Incidentally, the surname Mustafa Kemal's sister took is Atadan, which means 'from the Ata(türk)' or 'related to Ata(türk).'

With his adoption of Atatürk as surname, a new phase began. Until 1934, the title Gazi served to legitimise Mustafa Kemal and helped ease the transition from the Ottoman to the republican period. But from 1934, the surname Atatürk implied that Mustafa Kemal no longer needed the legitimation afforded by the title Gazi. From then onwards, he himself became the source of legitimacy. He became the centre of how the new secular Turkish identity was defined. Ata means more than a father. It means ancestor, the progenitor. Hence, the criteria for being a Turk was transformed into accepting that Mustafa Kemal was indeed Atatürk, that is, the person who created the new Turkish identity. Although Kemalism criticised the Ottoman sultans as being Oriental despots or tyrants whose actions were not bound by any law, the surname Atatürk signified a power and status no Ottoman sultan could ever acquire (or would want to).

### **Mustafa, Kemal, Gazi, Atatürk: Naming the Names of the 'Great Leader'**

In the section above, I have focused on Gazi and Atatürk, the first being the honorific title of Mustafa Kemal and the second his surname. Yet, this is not the whole story with respect to the multitude of the ways he was called from his birth until his death. In this section I shall do just that, which will tell us the story of secularisation and moving away from the Ottoman Turkish tradition.

#### *In the beginning, He was only a Mustafa*

When Atatürk was born, he was given his first name, Mustafa. Mustafa has been and still is one of the most common male names in Turkey along with Mehmet, the Turkified form of Muhammad,

Ahmet, and Mahmut, all of whom were the names of the Prophet of Islam.<sup>409</sup> Until the modernisation reforms of the nineteenth century, the great majority of first names in Turkey were Islamic names. As the eminent Turkish folklore researcher İlhan Başgöz points out, family devotion played an important role besides religious devotion. Many parents simply gave their children the names of their own parents or other relatives, which happened to be Islamic names.<sup>410</sup> Either way, religion and tradition, which I have combined under the signifier of Islam in the previous chapters, had been influential in the Ottoman Turkish society.

At this point, research undertaken by Richard Bulliet on the first male names in Turkey from 1840s onwards offers illuminating conclusions.<sup>411</sup> Firstly, he focuses on the three names, Mehmet, Ahmet, and Ali, which constituted nearly one third of all male names in the pre-*Tanzimat* period. Moving in time, Bulliet shows the popularity of these three names ‘plunges sharply and steadily to a low point in 1885-1889 followed, after a brief recovery, by a still deeper low in 1905-1909 when barely 8 percent of the male population bore the names.’<sup>412</sup> Afterwards the popularity of these names increases steadily to about 15 percent in 1920-24, and remains more or less steady around 13 percent. Bulliet argues that these turning points in the popularity of the three most popular male names in Turkey ‘coincide precisely with certain major events in the history of modern Turkey. Most notably ... the Young Turk Revolution of 1908 ... and the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923.’<sup>413</sup> Finally, the fact that the popularity of these three names remained more or less steady during the four decades after the radical reforms of Atatürk is interpreted by Bulliet as proof that ‘the disestablishment of Islam from its central place in people’s lives was primarily a product of Tanzimat modernisation and that the Atatürk reforms simply ratified and made visible what was already an accomplished fact.’<sup>414</sup>

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<sup>409</sup> The list of the commonest male names continues with Ali, the name of the fourth caliph and the prophet’s cousin, followed by Hasan and Huseyin, the names of the two grandsons of the prophet.

<sup>410</sup> Başgöz, İ. (1998) “The Meaning and Dimension of Change of Personal Names in Turkey,” in Silay, K. (ed.), *Turkish Folklore and Oral Literature: Selected Essays of İlhan Başgöz*, Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, p.226. Quoted in Türköz, M.F. (2004) “The Social Life of the State’s Fantasy: Memories and Documents on Turkey’s 1934 Surname Law,” University of Pennsylvania, Unpublished PhD Thesis, p.22. Also see Türköz, M.F. (2007) “Surname narratives and the state–society boundary: Memories of Turkey’s family name law of 1934,” *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 43, No. 6, pp. 893-908.

<sup>411</sup> Bulliet, R.W. (1978) “First Names and Political Change in Modern Turkey,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 9, no. 4, pp. 489-495. Bulliet used a restricted number of lists of people who were members of a particular organization at a certain time, for example, the first names of the members of the 1920 parliament (and consequently, their father’s names), hence his results are not based on a large sample.

<sup>412</sup> *Ibid*, p. 491.

<sup>413</sup> *Ibid*, p. 491.

<sup>414</sup> *Ibid*, p. 493.

Every Turkish schoolchild knows the story of how little Mustafa received his second name Kemal. In the military secondary school, around 1892-93, Mustafa excelled at mathematics, and coincidentally, his maths teacher's name was Mustafa, too. One day, after receiving the top grades in an exam, the maths teacher Mustafa told the student Mustafa "You are a Mustafa, I am a Mustafa, and that creates confusion. So, from today onwards let your name be Mustafa Kemal." This popular story attributes the reason for the second name Kemal to his success at class, since Kemal is a name of Arabic origin, meaning perfection. However, according to Zürcher, the math teacher must have been a Young Turk, and the name Kemal was a reference or show of respect to the famous "poet of liberty," Namık Kemal.

With the Namık Kemal connection uncovered, the naming of Mustafa as Kemal acquires further significance, because it took place during the "tyrannical regime" of Abdülhamid II. The sultan was extremely suspicious of references to certain names in public, thinking that they might be code words for an assassination attempt for his life, or preparations for a coup d'état. Abdülhamid lived at the Yıldız Palace, *yıldız* meaning star, hence newspapers were forbidden to use the word star. In similar fashion, the crown prince's name was Reşad, and it was again forbidden in the press. Furthermore, the literature extolling the virtues of the constitutional revolution of 1908 and attacking the "tyranny" of Abdülhamid records that people whose first names were Resad would change their names to similar sounding Neşad. Under these circumstances, giving and taking the name of Namık Kemal, an influential critique of Abdülhamid, who had died in exile and whose works were banned at the time, must have been a daring move.<sup>415</sup>

#### *The Allure of the Ottoman Military Title, Paşa*

After graduating from the Military Academy, Mustafa Kemal climbed the ranks in the military, albeit somewhat slower than his peers. During World War I, he was finally promoted as Paşa in 1916, the highest military rank in the Ottoman system, and from then onwards, he was known as Mustafa Kemal Paşa. In the period 1919-1921, before he was given the honourific title Gazi, we find him paying great attention to his status and his titles, which were the main rhetorical vehicles for him to promote the legitimacy of his struggle. For once, he would not leave Istanbul and set

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<sup>415</sup> In Chapter Two, I have discussed the debate in the portrayal of Abdülhamid II in the republican period as 'the Red Sultan' (Oriental despot) or the 'Great Khan' (just sultan) through the concepts of liberty vs justice. As we see here, this debate can alternatively be read as a struggle between Atatürk, the 'liberator' and the founder of new Turkey, and Abdülhamid II, the Ottoman sultan representing the justice ideals of the Ottoman Turkish tradition.

foot on the Anatolian shores in May 1919 without securing the post of the newly created inspector general of the Third Army, ostensibly to investigate the clashes between the Turkish and Greek locals in the Black Sea Region.

The Kemalist discourse, following Mustafa Kemal's own story as he primarily told in his *Great Speech*, makes 19 May 1919, the day he set foot in Anatolia, as the starting point of the national liberation war.<sup>416</sup> Today we know that the resistance had been started as early as 1917 by the CUP leadership through the secret intelligence organisation *Teskilat-i Mahsusa*, when it became apparent that the Allied powers would win the war and the country might face invasion. After the signing of the armistice on 30 October 1918, we find Mustafa Kemal lobbying for his appointment to the cabinet as the war minister, and even plotting a coup d'état when this lobbying effort did not bear fruit. In addition, there is now credible evidence that the scattered but still influential and functional CUP leadership had decided to place Mustafa Kemal Paşa to lead the resistance movement in Anatolia. As part of that resistance plans, Kazım Karabekir's appointment as the commander of the Third Army in Erzurum was secured in February 1919. Kazım Karabekir records in his memoirs that after he left Istanbul and assumed his duty in eastern Anatolia, he called Mustafa Kemal to join him in Anatolia, but Mustafa Kemal insisted on receiving an official appointment first. Of course, it might be argued that Mustafa Kemal was asking for an official appointment not out of personal concerns but to have a stronger hand and a valid excuse to travel around and organise the resistance.

It is essential for the Kemalist discourse to attribute *all* glory of the national war for liberation to Mustafa Kemal in full exclusivity, and this constitutes a foundation stone for the Kemalist struggle for legitimacy. It is especially important to picture him as the originator of the resistance movement, hence the date on which he landed at Samsun, that is, 19 May 1919 becomes all the more significant.

At this point, I would like to illustrate how seemingly minor details in the story of the national liberation war as told by Mustafa Kemal in his *Grand Speech* in 1927 create a narrative that places him at the centre of action. When he landed at Samsun on 19 May, the very first thing he did was to send a telegraph to Kazım Karabekir in Erzurum. Therefore this telegraph must have been the first document published in the appendices of the *Grand Speech*, but it is moved back to the tenth place, clearly to minimise the role of Kazım Karabekir at the time. In the telegraph, Mustafa Kemal told Karabekir of his intent to 'come to Erzurum, where you are,' but in the *Speech* this is changed

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<sup>416</sup> The speech begins with the famous opening statement: 'Gentlemen, I landed at Samsun on the 19<sup>th</sup> May, 1919. This was the position at that time: The group of Powers which included the Ottoman Government had been defeated in the Great War. The Ottoman Army had been crushed on every front. An armistice had been signed under severe conditions.' He then goes on to describe the situation of Turkey at that time as one that is bordering on absolute defeat and dissolution (*izmihlal-i kat'i*). Atatürk, M.K. (1981) *A Speech Delivered by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk 1927*, p. 1.



as to 'go to Erzurum.' The difference between coming and going is the difference between being a member of a wider struggle, which Mustafa Kemal had been in May 1919, and portraying oneself as the divinely ordained leader of the liberation movement, which is the official version.

After setting foot at Samsun, Mustafa Kemal Paşa travelled inland and immediately began deviating from his official task. He began a furious activity of issuing declarations and contacting people throughout Anatolia by telegraph. This aroused suspicions against his real intention at the capital. In order to appease these suspicions and show his loyalty to the sultan, he would sign his letters as 'the honorary aide de camp of the sultan' and he proudly carried the insignia related to that duty on his uniform.<sup>417</sup> He would continue to publicly declare his loyalty to the sultan and the caliph even after the sultan declared him as a rebel and a death fatwa was issued against him by the grand mufti in Istanbul.

In early July 1919, Mustafa Kemal could no longer pretend that he was in the service of the Sultan, who had been trying to remain in friendly terms with the Allied powers, and organising a resistance movement at the same time, and he was thus forced to resign from the military. The Kemalist discourse emphasises Mustafa Kemal's resignation from his official position with great fanfare, but it is mostly silent on the fact that he had been dismissed from the military the day before, and orders were dispatched to place him under arrest. He had been a soldier all his adult life, but now he no longer carried an official title, he was no longer a Paşa.

A crucial event took place on the day Mustafa Kemal resigned from the military, which proved the importance of carrying the mantle of legitimacy while determining his fate as the leader of the resistance. After he sends the telegraph to Istanbul tendering his resignation, his chief of staff, Kazım (Dirik), who has been a loyal officer, asks him, 'Now that you have resigned, from whom am I going to take orders? To whom shall I give the official documents in my possession?' Though this request is technically correct and legal, it is nevertheless an act of disloyalty and nothing short of desertion. Mustafa Kemal is disheartened and is in despair. He is making plans to take his belongings and escape to Aleppo. He complains to his old friend, Rauf Bey, 'You see, those who were saying "you are everything" an hour ago now say "you don't exist."' At the same moment, the news of Kazım Karabekir coming towards Mustafa Kemal's residence with a company of troops arrive. Rauf Bey records in his memoirs that 'Mustafa Kemal turned pale for a moment. He knew that Kazım Karabekir had orders to arrest him.' Kazım Karabekir enters the room. Everybody is nervously waiting to see what he is going to do. He stands at attention, and salutes Mustafa

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<sup>417</sup> Mustafa Kemal had accompanied Sultan Vahideddin when he was a prince to Germany to watch observe military manoeuvres as the prince's aide de camp (*yaver*). But in 1919, he did not have such an official duty. By calling himself as the honorary holder of that title, he was alluding to his services to the sultan during that trip and trying to show his loyalty.

Kemal, who is no longer in the army and no longer his superior. This was a trying moment in Mustafa Kemal's life.

In the Kemalist discourse, referring to him as simply Mustafa Kemal, without adding Paşa, gazi, or Atatürk, points to that revolutionary moment. At the same time, this is a call to fellow Kemalists to emulate their leader, rise to the occasion, and act, even if they carry no official duty or title—even if they carry nothing but their given names. In the Kemalist discourse, 'I am a soldier of Mustafa Kemal' means 'The laws of the country and the orders of the current government may see what I am about to do as illegal, but I follow Mustafa Kemal's example. Mustafa Kemal defied orders and started the national resistance movement in Anatolia. Now, I am following his footsteps.' At the same time, another model for emulation is provided by Kazım Karabekir. His decision to recognise Mustafa Kemal's leadership was certainly a breach of orders coming from Istanbul, hence it was an illegal act. But this is the very moment when legality and legitimacy part ways. The fact that Istanbul was under occupation and the policies of the Istanbul government were colliding with the 'national' interests nullifies that government's legitimacy, and allows the resistance movement to challenge its authority.

#### *Kemalist Principle of Reformism or Revolutionarism*

The Kemalist principle of reformism or revolutionarism addresses precisely this question of whether it is permissible to disregard the existing legal (and legitimate) regime, and move into the realm of illegality, in the name of saving the nation. Reformism joined the rank of the Kemalist principles and became one of the 'six arrows' in 1931, together with etatism, but the Kemalist reforms in the 1920s were all carried out under the reformist zeal. In the late 1920s and early 1930s, the whole endeavour of Kemalist reforms were generally called as 'The Turkish Reform' (*Türk İnkılabı*), but later on they were called with the appellation 'Atatürk's reforms,' as the figure of Atatürk became the dominant signifier of Kemalism.

The relationship between secularism and reformism is apparent from the outset in the terminology, which manifests itself as it does in so many occasions throughout my thesis as an antagonism between the 'old, Ottoman Turkish,' and the 'new, purified Turkish.' In the former language, the word used to describe the rapid transformation that the reforms in the 1920s and 1930s caused was *inkılab*, an Arabic origin word derived from the root *k-l-b*, meaning to turn over, transform, or change.<sup>418</sup> During the language reform, *devrim* was coined, from the Turkish root *devir-*, meaning to topple, or overthrow. The two words were supposed to be equal —after

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<sup>418</sup> Incidentally, Persian has the same loanword from Arabic and the Iranian Islamic Revolution of 1979 is called *İnkılab-ı İslami* in Persian.

all, the new word was coined to *replace* and *take the place of* the old one. However, in time, they evolved through different paths, and came to signify radically different interpretations of Kemalism. *inkılab* came to be preferred by what we could call ‘conservative Kemalism’ or ‘right Kemalism,’ whereas *devrim* became the preferred choice for those who could be called as ‘radical Kemalists’ or ‘left Kemalists.’ If *inkılab* represented a Kemalism that acknowledged the position of Islam in Turkey while trying to control, contain and define it at the same time, *devrim* represented a Kemalism that was more radical, or even militant, in its secularist zeal to drive Islam away from the public domain.

For simplicity, I shall refer to *inkılab* as reform or transformation, and to *devrim* as revolution. Hence, what we have at hand is that the different interpretations of Kemalism range from a conservative one which calls the changes introduced by Atatürk as reforms or transformation (not surprisingly, this interpretation is quite comfortable in accomodating a ‘rational’ Islam), to a radical one which regards Kemalism as a true revolution, the first anti-imperialist struggle that inspired the other Third World countries.

Besides reflecting the evaluation of Kemalist reforms in their historicity, this principle is about being constantly on the alert for the possibility of the ‘internal enemies of Kemalism’ capturing the government authority and taking up arms against it to protect Kemalism and the republic from sliding into backwardness when such an event takes place.

The most eloquent expression of this principle is found in Mustafa Kemal’s famous ‘Address to the Youth’ with which he ended his *Grand Speech*. This address firstly gives the duty to ‘protect and defend the Turkish independence and Turkish Republic’ to the Turkish Youth. In a normal state, this duty would fall on the executive branch of the government, and more specifically, on its security forces, however, Mustafa Kemal charges the Turkish Youth with this duty. But being ‘young’ here is not a physical quality, but a mental one, associated with the ‘eternal youth’ that following the principles of science and rationality would bring to the Kemalists. The address then depicts the conditions in a hypothetical future, when the Turkish Youth must rise up and carry out its duty. Although set in a hypothetical future, the conditions describes by Mustafa Kemal exactly coincide with the conditions in Turkey, as he observed on 19 May 1919: ‘The enemies have won a spectacular victory. All the castles [of the country] have been seized, all the ports have been occupied, all the national armies have been disbanded, all corners of the country have been effectively placed under occupation.’ But it is not only the foreign enemies that the country may be facing (or, as in Mustafa Kemal’s own narrative, *had faced*). Far more important are the internal enemies, those who collaborate with the foreign enemies: ‘Those holding power in the country may be ignorant, in error, or even in treason. They may unite their personal interests with the interests of the occupiers.’ Then, even under these direst conditions, Mustafa Kemal

maintains, it is incumbent on the Turkish Youth to secure the Turkish independence and save the republic. With this address, Mustafa Kemal's *Grand Speech* comes to a full circle. Not only his actions are justified, and his resulting rule is legitimised, it is also presented as a model for future generations of Kemalists to follow.

The conflictual relationship between democracy and liberalism manifests itself in Kemalism with an inherent tension between the Kemalist principle of Reformism and the rule of law. As Chantal Mouffe relates, 'Franz Neumann, for his part, points to the fact that, while both sovereignty and the rule of law were constitutive elements of the modern state, they were irreconcilable with each other, for highest might and highest right could not be realised at one and the same time in a common sphere. So far as the sovereignty of the state extends, there is no place for the rule of law.'<sup>419</sup> As I shall argue below, there are grounds to argue that in the Kemalist discourse, Atatürk, and by extension Kemalism, holds sovereignty. So far as Kemalism regards its sovereignty to know no boundaries, it is bound to clash with the rule of law, and that clash is represented by the Kemalist principle of Reformism. As Falih Rifki Atay, a staunch Kemalist, categorically states 'democracy and reformism cannot be reconciled; a revolution cannot be democratic.'<sup>420</sup> For Atay, the multiparty politics is a regime of concessions [to regressive forces].<sup>421</sup> In another book, he asserts that 'democracy in Turkey means the dominion of hodjas and regressives.'<sup>422</sup>

#### *A Civilian Criticism of Mustafa Kemal Clinging to Military Insignia at the Erzurum Congress*

On 23 July 1919, the Erzurum Congress convened. At that time, the delegates were suspicious of Mustafa Kemal's position. They did not know much about him, yet they knew that he was from Salonica, the hotbed of Young Turks, and he had been the chief of staff of the Action Army, which travelled from Salonica to the Ottoman capital during the 31 March affair in 1909 and crushed the rebellion against the Young Turk rule. Although he was known to have clashed with the CUP leadership, especially with Enver, he was probably considered a Young Turk, which was an extremely unpopular appellation in Anatolia in those days. Finally, it was known that one of the reasons Mustafa Kemal Paşa was sent from Istanbul to Anatolia was to dissolve the nationalist resistance movements that had appeared in various localities, so as not to displease the Allied Powers. The congress did not initially want to accept him as a delegate, since membership required election by a local Defence of Rights Association. Only when Kazım Karabekir gave his

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<sup>419</sup> Mouffe, C. (2006) "Religion, Liberal Democracy, and Citizenship," in *Political Theologies: Public Religions in a Post-Secular World*, H. De Vries and L.E. Sullivan (eds.), New York: Fordham University Press, p. 319.

<sup>420</sup> Atay, F.R. (1961) *Batış Yılları*, İstanbul: Dünya, p. 141.

<sup>421</sup> *Ibid*, p. 103.

<sup>422</sup> Atay, F.R. (1933) *Eski Saat 1917-1933*, İstanbul, p. 433.

personal assurances to the congress and after the resignation of a delegate, whose place Mustafa Kemal could take, was Mustafa Kemal able to join the proceedings.

An interesting event happened on the first day of the congress which is worth noting. When Mustafa Kemal entered the congress hall, people were surprised to see him still wearing his uniform, although he had resigned from the military a few weeks ago. And it was not a simple field uniform he was wearing, but a glorious ceremonial attire with his special 'honourary aide de camp to the sultan' insignia. It was a well calculated move on Mustafa Kemal's part, and indeed, many delegates rose to greet him with respect. The reaction of Kadirbeyoğlu Zeki Bey, a delegate from Trabzon, at this moment came as a cold shower to Mustafa Kemal: 'O Paşa! First get rid of your uniform and insignia, then you may address the congress. Hence the national force shall not turn into military oppression.' Zeki Bey's subsequent words show the remarkable degree of civic consciousness and underline the democratic parliamentary potential in Turkey, whose roots went back to 1876: 'We have only one concern ... And that is to realise this national movement with a non-military force. History in front of us is a live example. Any reform undertaken by the military turns into revolution and ends with oppression and dictatorship. ... The real issue is to have the people make the reform and bring it to success. Our purpose and intention is not to have military interference in this task, and create the national organisation based on the decisions of the congress, which derives from the power and the authority of the people.'<sup>423</sup> After a few minutes of silent deliberation, Mustafa Kemal backed down. He thanked Zeki Bey for his warning, left the congress building, and returned shortly in a civilian dress that he borrowed from the governor.

This incident is notable in another respect regarding the Kemalist attempt to censor history and tell the story of the Turkish liberation movement solely from the perspective of Mustafa Kemal. Mustafa Kemal himself does not talk about it in his *Grand Speech* in 1927, hence it is not found in the official historiography. However, Kazım Karabekir tells the story in his book *İstiklal Harbimiz*. Karabekir first attempted to publish this book in 1933, but he was prevented. The printing house was raided by the security forces and all copies of printed so far was destroyed. His home was also raided and all his manuscripts and his document archive were confiscated. But Karabekir had already taken precautions and he later wrote 'All they could capture and destroy was a ghost of my work.' He could only publish his work in 1953, after the end of the one-party era.

Let us now move to the year 1983, and see how Sina Akşin, who can be called as a Kemalist historian, considers Mustafa Kemal's resignation from the military and Zeki Bey's reaction when he attempted to attend the congress in military uniform after his resignation, in a detailed study

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<sup>423</sup> Kadirbeyoğlu Zeki Bey (2007) *Kadirbeyoğlu Zeki Bey'in Hatıraları*, Ö.F. Lermioğlu (ed.), İstanbul: Sebil Yay., pp. 58-61.

of the period he published in that year.<sup>424</sup> Akşin mentions the central government's order relieving Mustafa Kemal of his official duties on 8 July, the day before his resignation, but he is silent on the part of the order about Mustafa Kemal's arrest. He then quotes Mustafa Kemal's eloquent declaration of his resignation at length, but in the end notes: 'That Mustafa Kemal did not mention in his declaration that he had been relieved of his duty must be taken naturally, since it would put his resignation in a shadow to a certain degree.'

Regarding Zeki Bey's reaction, Akşin cites a book on the Erzurum Congress, published in 1968, by Mahmut Goloğlu: 'According to a conclusion reached by Goloğlu, which however is not verified by some other sources, when Mustafa Kemal attended the Erzurum Congress after [his resignation from the military], he was warned by a delegate from Trabzon and he took his uniform off. Even if such an event had happened, it serves to underline how appropriate Mustafa Kemal's decision to resign from the military was.' Akşin then refers to Kazım Karabekir's statement that Mustafa Kemal took the resignation decision with great difficulty and reluctance, but then he says 'what is important here is that he resigned in the end.'

What we see here is that in Akşin's story, the only person whose actions have an overarching purpose and determination is Mustafa Kemal. Akşin portrays Mustafa Kemal's resignation as a brave act and sacrifice, when the reality was that the central government's order dismissing him from official duty and requesting his arrest had left him no other choice. Furthermore, Akşin is extremely reluctant to accept the historicity of an incident which would damage the official version. Finally, we should remember that the memoirs of the key person in this incident could only be published in 2007, which explains how and why the official version of history could persist for such a long time.

### *Legitimacy through Chairmanship of the National Popular Organisations*

At the Erzurum Congress, the Association for the Defence of the Rights of Eastern Anatolia was formed.<sup>425</sup> Mustafa Kemal was elected as the chairman of this association and began using this title in his correspondence. In September 1919, Mustafa Kemal organised Sivas Congress, which was national in scope. Until then, various defence of rights associations had been established throughout the country, and at the Sivas Congress, they were all united under the Association for the Defence of the Rights of Anatolia and Rumelia, referring to the whole geographical area of Turkey. Mustafa Kemal became the chairman of the Representative Committee of the association. On 23 April 1920, the Grand National Assembly of Turkey was opened in Ankara and

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<sup>424</sup> Akşin, S. (1983) *İstanbul Hükümetleri ve Milli Mücadele*, İstanbul: Cem Yayınevi, pp. 470-471.

<sup>425</sup> The selection of the date 23 July is significant in that it was the anniversary of the 1908 revolution.

Mustafa Kemal was elected as the president of the parliament, which would be his official title from then onwards. Mustafa Kemal continued to be a civilian and used the title ‘president of the parliament’ until August 1921, when the situation in the western front became serious and the parliament agreed to appoint him as commander-in-chief with extraordinary powers in August 1921. From then onwards, until his second resignation from the military in 1927, well after he eliminated all opposition and established his hegemony, he was Mustafa Kemal Paşa again.

### *Taking up the Surname Atatürk, Dropping the First Name Mustafa*

In the above section, I have discussed his title *Gazi* and compared it with his surname Atatürk, which he assumed in November 1934, so I will not dwell on these again. However, I would like to point out to a peculiar omission when he took Atatürk as his surname. In the *Ulus* newspaper, the story was given with the subtitle ‘Our president, whose first name is Kemal, has taken Atatürk as his surname.’<sup>426</sup> But wait, wasn’t his *first* name Mustafa, and Kemal the second? The same peculiarity is observed in the text of the law about the parliament giving him Atatürk as surname, which only refers to Kemal as his first name, and omits Mustafa.

In the Kemalist discourse, the disappearance of Mustafa does not appear prominently, and when it does, it is usually interpreted within the language reform. The reasoning goes as follows: ‘Since Mustafa was an Arabic name, it was not appropriate for Atatürk, ‘the father of the Turks.’ Hence it was dropped.’ Yes, Mustafa was an Arabic name, but it was at the same time, the name of the Prophet of Islam. In either case, it was associated with the ‘old order’ and with Islam, the Arabic Islam, and it had no place in the ‘new Turkey’ the secularisation drive of Kemalism tried to establish.

Incidentally, we find a news story in *Çocuk Sesi* (Children’s Voice), a children’s magazine published by the Ministry of Education, reporting in its April 1933 issue that 45 students, from the Muslim Turkish, Christian and Jewish families, in the Galata Primary School had taken Turkish names. Accordingly, Muslim Turkish children changed their names from ‘Arabo-Islamic names like *Mustafa* [the Prophet’s name], *Fahrettin* [pride of the religion], or *Haydar* [the appellation of Ali, the prophet’s nephew and the fourth caliph], to Turkic names such as *Çetin* [Tough], *Yıldırım* [Thunder], and *Damar* [Artery].’ The remarkable point here is that replacing the

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<sup>426</sup> *Ulus* (1934), “Atatürk: “Kemal” özetli önderimiz bu soyadını aldı,” 25 November. The newspaper had been called *Hakimiyeti Milliye* [National Sovereignty] since the beginning of the National Liberation War, but during the frenzy to ‘purify’ the Turkish language from the regressive Arabic, Persian (and of course, Islamic) elements, changed its name to *Ulus* [Nation] in 1934. It should also be noted that the newspaper’s old name used the Arabic-origin term, *millet*, to refer to the concept of nation, whereas the new name *ulus* was invented (borrowed from the old Mongol word for clan confederations) for the specific purpose of replacing it.

traditional/religious names with the Turkish ones was not restricted to the Muslim Turkish students at the school. 'Among the Jewish children, Isak became *Orhan* [the second Ottoman ruler], Mishon became *Selçuk* [the eponymous founder of the Seljuk dynasty], and Avram became *Ertuğrul* [the father of the first Ottoman ruler].'<sup>427</sup> This practice was in perfect harmony with the Kemalist attempt to define a Turkish identity as far away from any reference to Islam as possible. Kemalism promoted a new, secularised Turkish identity, in which there was place for the Christian and Jewish minorities, as well as the *Dönme*, secret followers of Sabbatai Sevi whose outward appearance was Muslim but who practiced the esoteric teachings of Sevi based on the Lurian Kabbalah within their own community in secret. I shall take up these points in more detail when I study Kemalism's version of nationalism.

I have noted above that one reason for the disappearance of Mustafa as Atatürk's first name was because of its Arabic origin. But then, this would implicate Kemal as well, since it was of Arabic origin, too. Indeed, that point was not missed and we see that even Kemal was changed! In the surname law of November 1934, Atatürk's first name was recorded as Kemal. In January 1935, Atatürk travelled to Istanbul and took the language reform committee with him. Newspapers were referring to him as 'Kemal Atatürk' up until 25 January, then on the 3 February issue of the *Cumhuriyet* daily, he is referred to as 'Atatürk the Leader,' without any reference to Kemal. Then, the next day, newspapers refer to him as Kamâl Atatürk. From then onwards, Atatürk's first name was known as Kamâl.

Even though it was not frequently needed, since calling him as Atatürk was more than enough, we come across this peculiar name in the literature from 1935 onwards. In 7 May 1935, the draft party programme of the RPP was published in the *Hakimiyeti Milliye* with the title 'The Principles of Kamâlistism.' On 9 May 1935, Recep Peker, the general secretary of the RPP, finished his radio speech on the party programme with 'Being the travellers in the way of Kamâlistism is an honour.' Next week, the RPP General Congress convened to discuss the new party program, which was reported in *The Times* in an article titled "'Kamalism" in Turkey.'<sup>428</sup> The 19 May 1941 issue of the American *Time* magazine ran a cover story on Turkey, in which Atatürk was referred to as Kamâl Atatürk.

The change may seem minor, but it is significant, because Kemal was an Arabic name, while Kamâl was a Turkic name. Never mind that no one had ever heard of it before. Kamâl appears Turkish at first sight because it conforms to a widely known rule of Turkish phonetics. Although no written Turkish source uses the word Kamâl, several theories were 'invented' by hardcore

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<sup>427</sup> Türköz, M.F. (2004) "The Social Life of the State's Fantasy: Memories and Documents on Turkey's 1934 Surname Law," University of Pennsylvania, Unpublished PhD Thesis, p. 55.

<sup>428</sup> *The Times* (1935) "'Kamalism" in Turkey," 17 May 1935.



Kemalists. Some claim Kamâl means castle in ancient Turkish, while others claim it means Red Shaman (*Kam-Al*), but what Kamâl means, or if it means anything at all, is immaterial here. What matters is the act of *changing* the name from an Arabic version, which was considered to belong to the 'old order' and hence not acceptable, to a Turkified version, even though it was artificial.

### *Returning Full Circle to Mustafa*

After his death in 1938, the most common way of referring to him remained 'Atatürk,' or 'The Great Leader Atatürk.' Yet, from the 1960s onwards, the 'radical' Kemalists, or those who called them 'true Kemalists' wanted to distinguish themselves from the official discourse, in which even the name of the ideology was transformed to Atatürkism, and began emphasising Mustafa Kemal and Kemalism. There was much talk of a need to reinvent the founding spirit of the early Kemalism, the National Forces (*Kuvayi Milliye*). With each successive military intervention, the names of Atatürk and Kemalism became contested domains once again. The official discourse emphasized Atatürk the statesman, Atatürk the commander in chief, and Atatürk the president, all of which sought to strengthen his position in the existing, legal framework. The Kemalist discourse emphasised Mustafa Kemal the rebel and the revolutionary. Yet, from the early 1990s onwards, a popular demand arose which wanted to see the human in both Mustafa Kemal and Atatürk. Books about his love affairs and his failed marriage became instant bestsellers. The culmination of this movement was the widely successful and controversial documentary *Mustafa* that appeared in 2008. This documentary tried to give the human portrait of the man, variously known as Mustafa Kemal, Gazi, or Atatürk, and for that reason, the title *Mustafa*, his first and only name given at birth, was the most appropriate.

### *Man of Seven Names*

We have followed the story of Mustafa Kemal through the multitude of names he took and titles he assumed throughout his life, from Mustafa to Mustafa Kemal, through Paşa, Gazi, and Kamâl Atatürk. The *Time* article I have referred to above, from 1941, calls him 'Man of Seven Names' in a photo caption: 'This blond, blue-eyed, Bacchic roughneck had seven names before he died as Kamâl Atatürk.' What emerges out of this journey is the conclusion that secularism, understood as the drive and desire to break from the Ottoman Turkish and Islamic tradition that was seen as the culprit behind Turkey's backwardness, played the central role in Kemalism, as reflected in the numerous changes in the names of Mustafa Kemal throughout his career.

## NAMES OF MUSTAFA KEMAL

Name	Explanation, Rank	Date, Period
Mustafa	(born)	1881
Mustafa Kemal	(given by his teacher)	1892-93
Mustafa Kemal Paşa		1916
Mustafa Kemal	(Resigned from the military)	9 July 1919
Mustafa Kemal	Chairman of the Representative Committee, Defence of Rights Association.	September 1919-April 1920
Mustafa Kemal	Chairman of the Grand National Turkish Assembly (GNTA)	20 April 1920 until republic
Mustafa Kemal Paşa	Commander in Chief	August 1921
Gazi Mustafa Kemal Paşa	After victory at Sakarya Battle	September 1921
Gazi Mustafa Kemal Paşa	President of the Republic of Turkey	29 October 1923 (president until death in 1938)
Gazi Mustafa Kemal	(resigned from military)	1927
Kemal Atatürk	(Mustafa dropped)	1934
Kamal Atatürk	(Turkish language reform)	1935
Great Leader Atatürk		from 1930s onwards
Mustafa	(title of documentary)	2008

**Figure 6:** The various names by which Mustafa Kemal was known throughout his life

### Kemalism and Sovereignty

The concepts of “national sovereignty,” “national will,” and “people’s will” that are so prevalent in the Kemalist discourse needs to be studied carefully. I have investigated debates on sovereignty in Chapter Three, but I shall return to the topic again.

Firstly, I shall look at general discussions on sovereignty in political literature. Firstly, there is *external* and *internal* sovereignty. The first refers to the sovereignty of a state within its territorial borders and places it as an actor in the international community, which is comprised of other

sovereign states like itself. The second refers to the sovereignty of a state in terms of its powers, usually divided into legislative, executive and legal. Another classification divides sovereignty into *de jure* and *de facto* sovereignty. The *de jure* sovereignty is related to the legitimacy of a state, which enables the state to claim that it has the *authority* to exercise its *power*.

I shall then argue that Kemalism claimed it derived its legitimacy from the people, hence the Kemalist state had *de jure* sovereignty, but in fact, Kemalism's legitimacy had other sources. These were:

- (i) Mustafa Kemal was the saviour of Turkey. If he had not come, Turkey would not exist as an independent state. (Refer to the "right of sword" story in the rise of the Ottoman Empire.) Mustafa Kemal won the liberation war hence he had the "right of sword" to rule Turkey. This right was symbolised by the heavy emphasis on his title as "Gazi" in the period 1922-1934. Since this is the most important argument towards Kemalism's legitimacy, Mustafa Kemal's persona needed to be amplified which acquired a super-human and even god-like quality.
- (ii) The Ottoman sultan lost his legitimacy since he cooperated with the enemy, and since he and his palace had for centuries exploited the Turkish nation.
- (iii) Since it was a matter of survival for Turkey to modernise, Kemalism was the only capable ideology to accomplish modernisation.

### **Atatürk as Sovereign**

I will argue that under Kemalism, sovereignty belongs to Atatürk, not to the nation, and Kemalism is the ideology that enables the Kemalist elite (after Atatürk's death) to exercise that sovereignty. In order to support this argument, I shall make a number of observations. These are rather like anecdotal evidence, but still point in one direction.

Mustafa Kemal was the first leader of a republic to have his statue erected during his lifetime. In this respect, he was more in line with Queen Victoria and the Austrian Emperor Franz Jozef, and he even appears to have surpassed Stalin. Mustafa Kemal was and still remains as the only head of state under a republican regime whose pictures were placed on coins and banknotes during his lifetime.<sup>429</sup>

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<sup>429</sup> Nişanyan, S. (2008) *Yanlış Cumhuriyet: Atatürk ve Kemalizm üzerine 51 Soru*, İstanbul: Kırmızı Yay., pp. 123-130.

In the first years of the Democrat Party regime, a specific law was enacted 'to protect Atatürk.' This law makes 'insulting the memory of Atatürk openly or cursing him' punishable with a prison sentence from one to three years. In any country where the rule of law is upheld, publicly insulting any person may be against the law, and even if there are special provisions for insulting the president, prime minister, or any other holder of public office, they pertain not to the individuals occupying these posts, but to their office. Besides, legislating a law with such specificity runs counter to the general principles of law.

According to the Law of Associations, if an association would like to have the terms Turkey, Turkish, Republic, National, Atatürk, or Mustafa Kemal in its name, permission must be obtained from the Interior Ministry. Hence, it is necessary to obtain permission to establish an Atatürkist Thought Association, but not an İsmet İnönü Appreciation Association (who was the second president of Turkey). Again, this shows the special place Atatürk is accorded among the symbols of the regime.

According to the Law Regarding the Turkish Flag, it is forbidden to append or modify the officially accepted flag. Yet, we see that with the surge in Kemalism from the mid-1990s onwards, Atatürk's image is frequently superimposed on the Turkish flag in the so-called *ulusalcı* (secular nationalist and Kemalist) literature. Such flags are proudly displayed and carried in the rallies of these groups.

More importantly, we see that in Turkey, Atatürk's words carry the weight of a sovereign's decrees. His speeches, writings, and statements are collected in official and semi-official canons, and they are treated as if they form a sacred corpus. They are then usually stripped off their historical particularity, just like the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad or any other religious figure. Hence, for example, when someone calling himself Kemalist sits down to study Atatürk's views on republicanism, he simply goes over what he said in 1922, 1923, or 1933, and comes up with a synthesis with the assumption that Atatürk's words carry a wisdom that is beyond historical.

Another result of this phenomenon is that all institutions justify themselves with respect to a saying of Atatürk. Hence, one may read an excerpt from a speech of Atatürk etched on the walls of the headquarters of the national pension fund, where he said it was a moral duty of any nation to honour its elder people who had worked so hard for the betterment of their people while young. On the walls of a sugar factory, you see an excerpt from Atatürk's speech when he opened the first modern sugar factory of Turkey in the mid 1920s. Such a legitimisation is so important that if a suitable speech could not be found, people simply invent one, as in the case of several ironic examples.

## Kemalist Legitimation in Operation against the Free Party Challenge in 1930

In this section, I shall look at how Kemalism legitimised itself on the face of the Free Party challenge in 1930, to bolster my argument that the Kemalist legitimation strategies were not based the modern political concepts, such as republicanism, popular support, or democracy.

### *Kemalist Response Against the Free Party Challenge in 1930*

The Free Republican Party was established in 1930 with Atatürk's encouragement, in order to fill the much needed vacuum of an opposition party in the country as well as quelling European criticism that the country was under a *dictature*.<sup>430</sup> Hence, from the outset, the Free Party was not 'free' at all, and it was not expected to mount 'real' opposition. However, there had already been a rising discontent with the one party regime, and the worldwide economic crisis simply exacerbated the plight of the poor. Hence, once Fethi Bey, the chairman of the party, began a tour of western Anatolia, where there had already been a rising discontent with the policies of the one party, he was met with an enormous outpouring of popular support for the advent of an opposition party. Mustafa Kemal and the RPP elites had envisioned the Free Party to take off some of the steam that had been building in the country, but when it emerged that the dissatisfaction in the country could not be contained by a meek opposition party, the Free Party was forced to close. The whole episode ran for a mere 90 days, but it provides us a good opportunity to look at the Kemalist legitimation strategies in the period.

During the brief existence of the Free Party, no general elections were held, but local elections were carried out in October 1930. The mayoral elections in Izmir, the major city on the Aegean coast which was the second economic centre in the country, were especially contested. Now, I shall look at how the *Anadolu* newspaper in Izmir, which was a fervent supporter of the RPP, called out to its readers on *why* they had to vote for the RPP. The newspaper's headline on 18 September 1930 was "Attention! The one who saved the country from the enemy invasion is the Republican People's Party whose general chief is the Great Gazi." This declaration goes one step further than calling Mustafa Kemal as the saviour, because it awards the position of the saviour not to him, but the party. This is an important distinction, because at the time, Mustafa Kemal was the president, and as the head of the state, he was expected to be neutral and beyond party politics. But he also kept the honorary title of the "eternal chief" of the Republican People's Party. One of the central arguments of the Free Party was that Mustafa Kemal was *their* leader as well, since he was the president and he was the hero of the national liberation war, and that he

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<sup>430</sup> This is the exact term Mustafa Kemal used to Fethi Bey when he invited Fethi Bey to establish an opposition party.

must not take sides in the political struggle between the two parties. The newspaper headline is squarely aimed to thwart such an attempt to “steal away” Mustafa Kemal from the RPP.

The RPP’s claiming whole ownership of the “Atatürk” brand intensified after Atatürk’s death, and that is yet another antagonising aspect of Kemalism in Turkey. The RPP denies the consensus and the broad support in the First Parliament, and claims that it is the party that liberated the country, and established the republic. Then, by this logic, opposing the RPP means opposing Atatürk and Kemalism.

Returning to the newspaper headline, it is an appeal to the voters, arguing that they *must* vote for the RPP *because* it is the party that has the honour of liberating the country. The same issue of the newspaper contains a public speech Mahmut Esat Bey during the election campaign, in which he criticises the opposition for being ungrateful:

“I am the member of the RPP, because this is the party that saved the homeland. This party has made the greatest revolution in the world and brought the Turkish nation, which had been assumed dead, within the most civilised nations of the world. ... Let us think and listen to our conscience, and ask those who had defected the RPP, thanks to whom did they acquire the felicity [of independence] they are enjoying now?”

The important point in Mahmut Esat Bey’s speech is that the relationship he envisions between the voters and the party is one that is established through gratitude, which does not leave any space for *rational* choice. It is an asymmetrical relationship because you cannot question or criticise someone who saved your life. Clearly this cannot be the basis for a democratic political environment.

I must emphasise that although this example is from 1930, my interest is not focused on how the Kemalists of the time, namely Mustafa Kemal and other RPP leaders, treated opposition. Throughout the thesis, I have been at pains to direct my attention on the Kemalist discourse, and the mentality I am portraying here is still prevalent among the Kemalists.

On 24 September 1930, the *Anadolu* newspaper published a terse communique addressing the people of Izmir, calling them to listen to their ‘conscience, go to the ballot boxes and then vote.’ The following questions were posed to the readers: ‘Do you think about the eternal victory of independence the Saviour Gazi Mustafa Kemal created for Izmir? ... Do you remember those who saved you from the Greek captivity seven years ago and your prisoner status at that time?’

The next day, the newspaper called out to the women of Izmir this time: ‘O Ladies of Izmir! It is the Republican People’s Party which gave you the right to vote and get elected. ... The ladies of Izmir are *obliged* to vote for the RPP, which gave them suffrage as well as all other civil and

political rights. There is no other way for them to act. ... It is the RPP that *bestowed* you with this *civilised* and *holy* right. The greatest virtue of the Turkish woman is being *grateful* towards benefactors.' (The emphasis is mine.)

I must stress again that the same mentality is not restricted to the particularities of 1930. It permeates the Kemalist discourse throughout and is prevalent even today among the Kemalist circles.

The history of emancipation is full of courageous people or groups, who acquire political and social rights through long struggles. However, what we see here is rights *bestowed* on women, but then we see that they are not in fact rights, since their bestowment is tied to the condition that they should vote for their 'emancipator.'

The double discourse of Kemalism operates here in two levels. At the surface, it claims that it has created a modern, 'civilised' society, in which people are empowered as individuals with rights. This is the modernising discourse. Yet, a deeper and more fundamental discourse cannot accept a situation in which people may criticise and in fact vote against Kemalism.

## **Conclusion**

Kemalism involves attacking and delegitimising the Ottoman past, focusing on its revolutionary moment as a legitimate rebellion against the Ottoman order, and emphasising the national liberation war as the source of its legitimacy. In doing so, the Kemalist discourse significantly distorts history and attempts to suppress and censor elements of history that does not fit its narrative. Most importantly, the Kemalist discourse attempts to portray Mustafa Kemal as the sole agent responsible for the glory of the victory. This in turn necessitates minimising, ignoring, or altogether denying the contributions of other individuals and groups in the national liberation movement. The support given by the religious scholars in Anatolia, and such Islamist figures as the national poet Mehmed Akif and Bediüzzaman Said Nursi, are prime examples. Kemalist discourse tries to portray the whole Ottoman dynasty and the bureaucracy during the Ottoman capital's occupation by the Allied Powers as traitors and collaborators with the enemy. The Kemalist discourse also exaggerates the national liberation war, as if it was conducted against all Western powers, especially the British, when in fact, not a single military confrontation took place between the nationalist forces and the British.

Apart from the legitimacy that it derives from the national liberation war as a just war, another significant Kemalist legitimization strategy is to portray Mustafa Kemal as a superhuman, almost divine figure. This makes Mustafa Kemal rise above history and acquire an overarching vision and purpose. Of all people, the Kemalist discourse maintains, Mustafa Kemal alone knew what needed to be done and he alone had the courage to do what many could not dare. Not only did he know, he *had always known*. Furthermore, Mustafa Kemal's position did not change according to the fluctuation of events, which is a sign of human fallacy. Opposing Mustafa Kemal and Kemalism then becomes a heresy in itself, akin to denying the existence of God.

Our overview of Kemalist legitimization strategies demonstrates that Kemalism does not attempt to secularise the political concepts; neither does it involve the desacralisation of the political. Hence, what Kemalism understands as secularism is not secularism in the true sense of the concept. Kemalism's secularism is first and foremost an attempt to dislocate Islam as the signifier of the Ottoman Turkish/Islamic tradition and take its place.



## Conclusion

Throughout the thesis a variety of issues are raised and a number of arguments are presented. Of those arguments, the major ones that are crucial to the main argument of the thesis may be summarized as follows:

1. **A.** Orientalism became the dominant attitude in the West towards the Ottoman Turkey in the nineteenth century.  
  
**B.** Orientalism described the Orient (Ottoman Turkey) in direct opposition to the situation in the West, as having all the undesirable attributes.
2. In the Orientalist discourse, Islam came to be the general signifier of all that was wrong in the East. Islam was seen as 'barrier towards progress.'
3. The Orientalist discourse was deeply influential in Ottoman Turkey on all political currents, but its influence on Kemalism was definitive. Kemalism can be defined as the general signifier of the idea that Turkey must adopt the western civilisation in its totality, including the western culture, music, dressing, alphabet, etc, and that Turkey must get rid of its past, symbolised by Islam, completely. Hence, Kemalism was an 'Orientalism from within.'
4. The ultimate aim of Kemalism was an utopia or fantasy, because Kemalism disregarded contingency, and tried to instil the social as it had come to being in the West through the centuries-long struggles in the political, without due care for the existing social and the political in Turkey, and without recognising the social's relationship with the political.
5. The differences attributed to the concepts of the liberty and the justice in the West and in the East highlight the failure of Kemalism to transform the political language in Turkey.
6. Since the supremacy of the West was based on the changes, reforms and revolutions that the West had been undergoing that defined modernity, Kemalism was absolutely thrilled by the concepts of progress, change, and development. The idea of 'catching up with the level of modern civilisation,' one of the major mottos of Kemalism, became the limit or the horizon of Kemalism, since it was impossible to see the day when Turkey finally caught up with that level.
7. There was a double discourse running throughout Kemalism, which manifested itself in every Kemalist reform. On the surface, the Kemalist reforms appeared to transform Turkey, but in reality, Kemalism could not accept the full implications of these reforms.

8. From the outset, Kemalism regarded Islam as the central problem it faced and as the most potent source of opposition to its existence.
9. While an underlying attitude in Kemalism adopted a very antagonistic stance against Islam and wanted to attack Islam head-on, another attitude realised the futility of such a strategy and tried to keep Islam under strict Kemalist control. In the meantime, a double discourse of 'corrupted Islam' vs 'true Islam' emerged.
10. Kemalist secularism is not secularism in the proper, Western sense of the concept.
11. Kemalism used secularism as a tool in defining the limits of the political.
12. A. Kemalism's inability to accept the principle of popular sovereignty forced it to resort to the legitimization strategies of the Ottoman Turkish/Islamic tradition.

B. Kemalism's struggle to establish legitimacy was also a struggle to delegitimize the Ottoman Turkish order and justify the Kemalist rebellion against the Ottoman authority at the outset of the national liberation war. This forced Kemalism to always remain in a state of crisis, always falling back on the point of its rebellion.

C. The various names adopted by Mustafa Kemal point out the ambitious extent of the Kemalist project, which attempted to completely eradicate the Ottoman Turkish tradition, culture and way of life, and create a brand new Turkish identity with no bearing to the past in its place.

From the beginning, three concepts, treated as discourses, have formed the backbone of my argument: Kemalism, secularism, and Orientalism. I have been trying to understand why Kemalism had to take such a hostile stance against the Ottoman Turkish tradition and against religion, that is, Islam. Already at this initial stage, the second question indicated that the sort of 'secularism' that Kemalism advocated had dimensions far exceeding a simple disentanglement of religion and politics. Nevertheless, I have treated Kemalist secularism as the central element of the Kemalist discourse throughout the thesis.

In addition, I have studied Orientalism as a discourse that characterised the western views about the Orient. From the perspective of this thesis, the Orientalist discourse meant much more than an academic effort to gather scholarly information on the Oriental peoples, their languages, customs, religion, culture, etc. The Orientalist discourse looked at the Orient, specifically at the Ottoman Empire or Turkey, identified what was wrong with it, and proposed what had to be done to reform it. In other words, the Orientalist discourse offered a clear political agenda for change in Turkey. In summary, I have presented in this thesis an intricate play of interaction among the

three discourses, namely, Kemalism, the secularist discourse dominant within Kemalism, and Orientalism. Then, the question becomes: 'How do these three discourses relate to each other?'

### **The West and Islam as the Two Central Signifiers Defining Kemalism**

Two signifiers readily emerge from the previous paragraph, which turn out to be essential to define what Kemalism is. These signifiers are 'the West,' and 'Islam.' Although it may be a stretch to refer to the totality of culture, literature, arts, peoples, and political systems of Europe and North America under the general signifier, 'the West,' it is nevertheless a real entity from the Turkish perspective. The Turkish national anthem refers to the West, Kemalist authors such as Tarık Zafer Tunaya and Niyazi Berkes refer to the West, in fact, whenever someone refers to 'the West,' what is meant is usually clear; there is no need to ask, 'Which West?' or 'What is the West?' The 'West' is a reference point in not only the Kemalist discourse, but in all other discourses in Turkey. In the case of Kemalism, the West was a mythical place where the 'contemporary level of civilisation' manifested itself, as I have discussed at length in Chapter Two, hence it was a target that needed to be reached. It was also a reference point through which the failings of the old Ottoman Turkish order were measured.

Kemalism is constructed on the premise that we live at a time period when the West is scientifically, technologically, culturally, politically, and even morally superior to 'us.' Whether 'we' are located in the Orient, the East, or the Near East can be debated, but what is certain is that 'we' are not as rich as, as powerful as, as fashionably dressed as, and in the final instance, 'as good as' the West. Kemalism's ultimate aim then becomes correcting this wrong. The existence of a superior West, then, becomes a necessary condition for Kemalism to exist, and the 'contemporary level of civilisation' becomes the limit of Kemalism that shall never be reached. If we imagine a hypothetical future, when Turkey has progressed sufficiently enough so that in economic, political, and social terms, it is on par with the European countries, then there is no place for Kemalism in such a future, there is no need for Kemalism to exist any further.

Kemalism does not consider the situation, whereby the Ottoman Turks found themselves sometime in the eighteenth or the nineteenth century to have fallen far behind the West, as the outcome of historical forces, which operate on timescales much larger than individual humans can grasp or control. If one of the most heavily debated questions of popular history in the republican period was 'Why had we fallen behind in the race for progress and civilisation?' that question is narrowed in the Kemalist discourse to 'Who is responsible for keeping us backwards

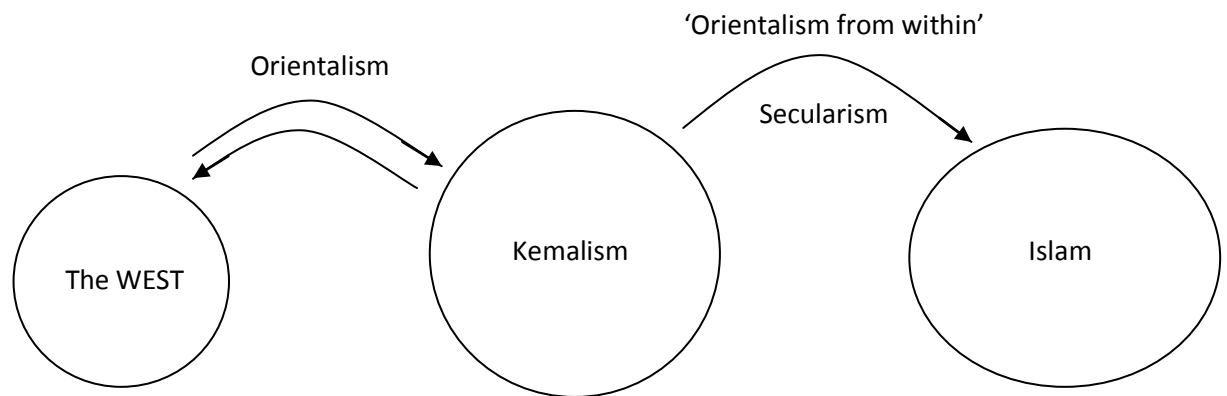
for centuries?’ For Kemalism, it did not happen by chance that Turkey had fallen into a backward state. Turkey was *deliberately* left backwards, because it suited the interests of certain people and groups. This is the most serious accusation, and it amounts to nothing less than high treason.

Foremost among those responsible for preventing Turkey’s progress were the Ottoman sultans and their close retinue at the palace, who lived a decadent life while common folk suffered under heavy taxes. The sultans are depicted as irrational, irresponsible people, whose rule knew no bounds; they are seen as what the Orientalist discourse would call ‘Oriental despots.’ The religious scholars were equally complicit, who exploited people’s sincere religious feelings for their personal benefit, and who prevented all reform attempts since they would jeopardise their privileged position. In the Kemalist discourse, the religious scholars are portrayed as insincere, cunning, sexually promiscuous, and dishonest people. Depending on the further political leanings of the Kemalist in question (whether it is socialism or right wing nationalism, which could exist *besides* Kemalism), feudal landowners exploiting the peasants on their land, ruthless tax collectors, import merchants, etc could also be added to this list of ‘the people’s enemies,’ in a way reminiscent of the construction of a people in Laclau’s study of populism through the formation of ‘an internal antagonistic frontier.’<sup>431</sup>

Some Kemalist authors set the point after which things started to go wrong for the Turks at the moment of their conversion to Islam, while others move that date forward to as late as the end of the sixteenth century, conveniently after the last great Ottoman epoch under Süleyman I. That period has generally been regarded in Ottoman historiography as the onset of the Ottoman decline. Two other popular historical event that signalled the Ottoman downturn in the Kemalist discourse are, (i) the destruction of the court astronomer-astrologer Takiyüddin’s observatory, and (ii) the purge of philosophy and other ‘rational’ subjects from the curricula of Ottoman *medreses*, which were the institutions of higher education. Not coincidentally, both these events happened around the end of the sixteenth century, in perfect harmony with the Ottoman decline theory. It should also be noted that references to the prevention of observatory, philosophy, and science fit well in the Kemalist ‘explanation’ as to why the Ottomans had fallen behind. On a related note, the late introduction of the printing press in the eighteenth century is considered as one of the major explanations on why the country remained backwards. In the Kemalist discourse, this again is not the outcome of complex social and cultural interactions, but is a deliberate sabotage of progress by the religious scholars.

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<sup>431</sup> Laclau, E. (2005) *On Populist Reason*, London and New York: Verso, p. 74.



**Figure 7:** The West, Kemalism, and Islam.

The West and Islam are constructed discursively in Kemalism, and they represent the boundaries of Kemalism. The West had a defining effect on Kemalism through the Orientalist discourse, whereas Kemalism's view of the West was largely determined as a reaction to the West's Orientalism. Furthermore, the way Kemalism approaches Islam (as 'the central problem,' as I discussed in Chapter Three) has been determined by the Orientalist approach, which in Kemalism becomes an 'Orientalism from within.' It will be seen that Kemalist secularism was nothing but the proposed solution to the problem of Islam.

In the Kemalist discourse, those responsible for holding Turkey backwards are seen to form a historical bloc of regression (*irtica*). Their greatest weapon in this struggle against enlightenment has been religion. They changed Islam, 'real Islam,' from its pure origins, which had been in perfect harmony with reason and logic, to a corrupt religion, filled with superstitions, ignorance, and exploited by a treacherous religious scholar class (*ulema*), who thought nothing but its own interests. Hence, Islam becomes the general signifier of all things that were wrong in the old Ottoman Turkish tradition.

These two signifiers, the West and Islam (which could well be considered as representing the Orient), represent two horizons for the existence of Kemalism, which defines itself with respect and in opposition to them. Then, Orientalism and secularism become the discursive elements through which Kemalism relates to these two signifiers.

## Orientalism and the Great West-East Barrier

Identifying the West and Islam, which as a signifier can readily be taken as representing the East, as central in the formation of the Kemalist discourse naturally brings us to Orientalism, which I discuss in detail in Chapter One. I look at Orientalism as a discourse that had arisen after the postulate that the West and the East represented two fundamentally contrasting worlds, with an impregnable barrier imagined in between. The elements of the Orientalist discourse are then formed through a chain of binary oppositions, with one extreme describing the state of affairs in the West, and its opposing pole, that in the East.

The western man acts in rational way, basing his decisions on a firm chain of reasoning, which makes him predictable, while the actions of an Oriental can never be rationalised, because he is chiefly motivated by his sentiments. The West is enlightened, scientific, sensible, while the Orient is superstitious, ignorant, and fanatical.

THE WEST or EUROPE	THE GREAT EAST/WEST DIVIDE	THE ORIENT or the OTTOMAN EMPIRE/TURKEY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Rational</li><li>- Enlightened</li><li>- Scientific</li><li>- Sensible</li><li>- Civilised</li><li>- Progressive</li><li>- Modern</li><li>- Determined to keep his destiny at hand</li><li>- Hardworking</li><li>- Honest</li><li>- Efficient</li><li>- Rule of law, civil liberties</li></ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Irrational</li><li>- Ignorant</li><li>- Superstitious</li><li>- Fanatical</li><li>- Barbarous</li><li>- Backward</li><li>- Traditional</li><li>- Fatalistic</li><li>- Lazy</li><li>- Corrupt</li><li>- Inefficient</li><li>- Ruled by 'Oriental Despot'</li></ul>

**Figure 1 (From Chapter One):** The Orientalist View of the West/Europe and the Orient/Ottoman Empire or Turkey.

I have also made a definition of Kemalism in Chapter One, which is crucial to my argument. I called Kemalism the general signifier of the idea that Turkey must adopt the western political system, values, and lifestyle without any exception, since the West signifies the 'level of modern civilisation,' and its version of modernity has universal applicability. In taking the West as the undisputed reference point, Kemalism was bringing forth a radical critique of the Ottoman past at the same time. Hence, Kemalism is a discourse, which agrees with the Orientalist diagnosis regarding the backwardness of Turkey, and which agrees with the proposed solutions the Orientalists had suggested for the salvation of the country. I have labelled Kemalism as an 'Orientalism from within.'

### *The Urgency of Modernisation as the Radical Driving Force of Kemalism*

When Kemalism looks at the West, it sees a level of progress thanks to the dynamics of change that has been operating for centuries. Hence, the West has advanced considerably. Besides, the pace of change in the West is even gaining momentum. Kemalism then looks at the East, and all it sees is stagnation. This means that the gap between the West and the East, already very large, is getting even wider and wider. Therefore, it is not enough for the Turkish modernisation to proceed at a speed equal to the pace of change in the West, for it would only preserve the existing gap, and 'catching up with the level of contemporary civilisation' becomes a matter of life and death.

These considerations lead Kemalism to a radical conclusion: the pace of change in Turkey must be even faster than that is found in the West. This sense of urgency permeates the whole Kemalist discourse. Most importantly, this gives Kemalism a license to dispense with the Ottoman Turkish past. The answer to any possible objection is ready: 'We do not have time to debate which part to keep and which part to abandon, as the West is reaching ever newer heights. Even if some mistakes are made and some valuable elements of the Ottoman Turkish tradition are thrown away in the process, since we are replacing them with the western elements, all shall be good.' On a related note, this sense of urgency makes Kemalism very impatient, even intolerant. There is just no time!

## **The Double Discourses of Kemalism**

The concept of 'Double Discourse' fits Kemalism so well that it arises in several different senses throughout the thesis. Firstly, the very act of positing the West-East duality readily gives rise to two discourses, the first describing an ideal world order that is thought to have materialised in the West, the modern, and the second describing the wretched, concrete reality of the 'now' that prevails in the East. Then, Kemalism tries to completely get rid of the old Ottoman Turkish political and social world order, and replace it with the western one, but then runs into serious problems when it mistakenly believes it can strip cultural formations and institutions off their political character. Thirdly, in its legitimization strategies, Kemalism runs into another double discourse.

### *The West vs Kemalism*

For Kemalism, there is one universal civilisation, and Turkey must embrace it. Kemalism rejects the distinction Ziya Gökalp makes between culture and civilisation, in which civilisation represents the universal and culture represents the local (or particular) aspects. Such a categorization would call for taking the western science and technology in, but leaving the western values out. Kemalism criticizes the Ottoman modernisation efforts for taking that hesitant path, and regards such a piecemeal modernization as having been doomed to fail from the start. The civilisation is universal and international, and it is the common heritage of humanity. Hence, taking western science and technology is not enough. Turkey must also take western clothing, music, etc. This is the universalist part of Kemalism. It looks at modernity as a totality, which is applicable everywhere, but which at the same time has materialised in the particular conditions of the West.

At the same time, Kemalism has a particularist component, which arises as soon as it needs to address the political, conflictual dimensions of modernity's universalism. A look at the world map suffices to highlight the 'geopolitical uniqueness' of Turkey, straddling the Balkans, the Caucasus, and the Middle East at the same time. Kemalism considers itself unique in the sense that it looks neither like liberal democracy nor socialism, the two major, competing alternatives in the West. Just as these regimes were born out of the particular historical circumstances in Europe, Kemalism has been tailored to the needs of Turkey. However, this soon turns into a free license for all the contradictions of Kemalist ideology and practice.

The Kemalists see themselves as having successfully become modern, or westernised, while they regard the people in Turkey to be still in an Oriental condition. Kemalists see themselves as the only agents capable of achieving the transformation of the Turkish people, because they are the



ones who know what the West stands for. In this respect, Kemalists can be called as the Occidentalists of Turkey, because they attempt to hegemonise the knowledge of the West.

In Chapter One, I have referred to a popular story in Turkey regarding the application of lower standards to students from the East at Sorbonne University, which is reflected in the stamp on their diploma, '*Bon pour Orient*,' meaning that their level of competence might be satisfactory for the East, but not good enough for the West. Such an application of double standards might have been understood in the colonial period, but then the West continues to treat the Kemalists as Orientals, who consider themselves to have already crossed the West-East barrier. The West also subjects Turkey to a different set of standards than it applies within its boundaries, although it has been reformed under Kemalism. The inescapable conclusion of all these considerations is that the West has failed to appreciate the enormous distance Kemalism helped Turkey to cross from its backward past towards the enlightened modernity. It puts the whole Kemalist enterprise into question. At this point, the Kemalists feel their efforts, Kemalism's efforts, are not appreciated by the West, and they are deeply disappointed, even angry.

The antagonistic dimension of Kemalism's attitude towards the West is revealed when Kemalists ask the hypothetical 'what-if' question, 'What if Mustafa Kemal had failed during the national liberation war? What if Turkey had been made into a British or American mandate in 1919-1920? What if the Kemalist reforms had not been carried out? What sort of a country would Turkey be today under such conditions?' The Kemalist answer to this question is unqualified: The caliphate and the sultanate would not be abolished, meaning that the Turks would continue to be subjects of an Oriental despot, instead of being proud citizens of the republic. The capitulations would continue to cripple Turkey, effectively making the country a colony. The Arabic script would still be in use, limiting Turkey's access to scientific knowledge. Instead of modern clothing, symbolised by the hat, Turks would still be wearing Oriental costumes, subjecting them to endless ridicule in the civilised world. In sum, the Kemalists conclude, the West would leave Turkey in a backward state. Hence, although the Kemalists' ultimate aim is to modernise Turkey and bring it up to the western standards, they believe the West does not want Kemalists to succeed in this endeavour. This gives the Kemalist effort a tragic colouring and makes them even more determined. Ultimately, Kemalism stands 'westernisation despite the West.' (*Batıya rağmen Batılılaşmak*)<sup>432</sup>

### *The Social and Political in the West and the East*

In Chapter Three, I have talked about the expression 'religion and the world' (*din ü dünya*) as reflecting the constitutive interplay between the social and the political in the Ottoman Turkish

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<sup>432</sup> Tunaya, T.Z. (1964) *Devrim Hareketleri İçinde Atatürk ve Atatürkçülük*, İstanbul: Milliyet.

tradition. For Kemalism, neither element of this tradition merited preservation, and the West had to be taken in wholesale, in both the social and the political dimensions.

At this point, I must clarify what I am trying to allude to by 'the political' and 'the social.' Here, by 'the political,' I understand the terrain shaped by 'power, conflict and antagonism,'<sup>433</sup> and 'the dimension of antagonism that is inherent in human relations, antagonism that can take many forms and emerge in different types of social relations.'<sup>434</sup> On the other hand, I understand 'the social' as the realm of established practices, which 'conceal the originary acts of their contingent political institution.'<sup>435</sup> The social then becomes 'as the ensemble of social relations that establishes a horizon for meaning and action, which is recursively validated by the social agents and thus possesses a relatively enduring character.'<sup>436</sup> Below, I shall talk about Kemalism's inability to come to terms with the inherently conflictual nature of the political, so at this point, I shall limit myself to Kemalism's failure to grasp the relationship between the social and the political, as well as its inability to comprehend the complexity of both concepts.

Numerous aspects of Kemalism, especially those related to the Kemalist reforms, studied in Chapters Two and Four underscore the above argument. Kemalism has tried to completely redesign society in Turkey by importing the totality of the social and the political as it existed in the West. A *republic* was proclaimed, people were declared as *citizens*, no longer imperial subjects, and all other elements of the modern western political order, from the *parliament* to *political parties* were adopted. However, in doing so, Kemalism disregarded the considerable experience that had already accumulated in Turkey by the 1920s. When one reads the Kemalist literature, one is led to the impression that Turkey received a parliament and a constitution only after Kemalism. Yet, the Turkish parliamentary tradition went a long way back to the consultative bodies of the *Tanzimat* period. The proclamation of constitutional monarchy in 1876, and its reinstitution in 1908 meant that the country had had a long tradition of parliament, constitution, political parties, and opposition before Kemalism. In this respect, far from being a progress, the one party regime that had solidified after 1925 was a step backwards.

When the Latin script was accepted, in the hope that this act would stimulate literacy, spark modern Turkish literature, lead to the emergence of a modern Turkish press, and hence help in the formation of an intellectual landscape in Turkey, comparable to that found in the West. However, simply changing the script by itself could never accomplish the creation of an intellectual environment, which had taken centuries of articulation through political struggles-in other words, which was the result of the constitution of the social in the West. In hindsight,

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<sup>433</sup> Mouffe, C. (2006) *On the Political*, London and New York: Routledge, p. 9.

<sup>434</sup> Mouffe, C. (2000) *The Democratic Paradox*, London and New York: Verso, p. 101.

<sup>435</sup> Mouffe, C. (2006) *On the Political*, p. 17.

<sup>436</sup> Torfing, J. (1999) *New Theories of Discourse: Laclau, Mouffe and Zizek*, Blackwell: Oxford, p. 70.

Kemalism appears to be extremely naïve in thinking that the social could be stripped off the inherently political dimension through the originary acts of its institution.

In Perry Anderson's words, 'But systematic though it was, the transformation that now gripped Turkey was a strange one: a cultural revolution without a social revolution, something historically very rare, indeed that might look a priori impossible. The structure of society, the rules of property, the pattern of class relations, remained unaltered.'<sup>437</sup> In the terminology I have adopted, what Anderson calls as 'cultural' is simply 'the social,' while what he calls as 'social' is actually 'the political.'

### *The Antagonistic Nature of Kemalism*

Kemalism's antagonistic treatment towards opposition, as I have discussed in Chapter Two, reveals its inability to come to terms with the true nature of the political. Kemalism is not just opposed to this or that particular opposition group, or to a particular criticism directed against it. In its attempt to wholly control the political arena, Kemalism is opposed to the idea of opposition altogether. I concur with Mouffe once again when she says 'A democratic society requires a debate about possible alternatives and it must provide political forms of collective identification around clearly differentiated democratic positions. Consensus is no doubt necessary, but it must be accompanied by dissent.'<sup>438</sup> Kemalism claimed that it alone represented the only viable and acceptable way for Turkey towards reform and modernisation, driving all other alternatives and possibilities out of the legitimate political realm. As Laclau notes, the Kemalist principle of populism 'excludes any notion of antagonism or internal division.'<sup>439</sup>

### *The Double Discourse in Kemalist Legitimation*

A further example of a double discourse that operates in Kemalism is provided in Chapter Four, with respect to Kemalist legitimation. That investigation has revealed that Kemalism does not derive its legitimacy from democratic or popular grounds. This forces Kemalism to continually fall back at the moment of its coming into existence, which was a moment of rebellion against the existing order. This forms the basis of the Kemalist principle of reformism or revolutionarism, which points to the innate tension with legality, and the need to respect the rule of law.

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<sup>437</sup> Anderson, P. (2008) "Kemalism," *The London Review of Books*.

<sup>438</sup> Mouffe, C. (2006) *On the Political*, p. 31.

<sup>439</sup> Laclau, E. (2005) *On Populist Reason*, p. 209.

Furthermore, it forces Kemalism to always live under siege mentality, and in a state of permanent crisis, always seeing the country under imminent danger of destruction.

Kemalism rests its legitimacy on being the ideology of Mustafa Kemal, the saviour of the homeland as *Gazi*, and the father of the new Turkish identity as *Atatürk*. Mustafa Kemal is *Gazi*, as much as the Ottoman sultans had been, therefore Kemalism, as the discourse representing the legacy of Mustafa Kemal, requires people to be grateful, and humbly accept Kemalist hegemony. Moving further in the Kemalist logic, Mustafa Kemal is *Atatürk*, the father of the Turks. As *Atatürk*, he becomes the reference point in the definition of who the new Turk is, and allegiance to *Atatürk* and Kemalism becomes the precondition to be considered as a Turk. Again, Kemalism tries to impose a relationship between itself and the people, not based on democratic participation or popular consent, but based on loyalty. In both cases, we see Kemalism resorting to traditional, pre-modern legitimation strategies, while claiming to have constituted a political order wholly based on the western model.

I agree with Mouffe when she argues ‘the drawing of the frontier between the legitimate and the illegitimate is always a political decision, and that it should therefore always remain open to contestation.’<sup>440</sup> Her criticism against the liberal theories of John Rawls holds equally well for Kemalism, which denies the political nature of its claims to legitimacy and tries to portray any attempt to contest it as tantamount to heresy, or even treason.

## **Kemalism and Democracy**

It is often noted in the recent critical evaluations of Kemalism that the six principles of Kemalism do not include democracy. Indeed, republicanism was one of those six principles but the Kemalist republicanism manifested itself first and foremost as an opposition to the monarchy. But then, Kemalism chose to suppress the fact that the Ottoman political regime from 1876 onwards was a constitutional monarchy, and portraying it as an absolute monarchy or ‘Oriental Despotism.’ Looking at Kemalism in a wider perspective, we realise that its embrace of such Western principles as republicanism, secularism, or populism was not whole-hearted; just like the Ottoman modernisers before, the Kemalists’ ultimate aim was to save the country from total oblivion, and westernisation was the only viable means to that end—and the emphasis needs to be placed on the word *means*. These concepts were never internalised, their full implications never realised.

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<sup>440</sup> Mouffe, C. (2006) *On the Political*, p. 121.

It is unfortunate that although Turkish modernisers were talking about such concepts as 'liberty' and 'constitution' as early as the 1860s, the Young Turks and then the Kemalists ended up under the influence of the more authoritarian political movements in the West. When the Young Turks were engaged in their struggle against Abdülhamid II from the 1880s onwards, the generally liberal atmosphere in Europe throughout the nineteenth century was coming to an end. Coupled with a downturn in world economy, leading to a world-wide colonial race among the Western powers, the West they had experienced was becoming more militant and less liberal. Likewise, the Kemalist reforms were enacted in the 1920s and 1930s, when the totalitarian regimes were in ascendance. Indeed, there were many articles in the Turkish newspapers throughout the early 1930s about the demise of the Anglo-Saxon liberalism, and the triumph of German discipline, Italian fascist youth organisations, and the rapid Soviet industrialisation.

The Kemalists were never democrats in the sense that they never trusted in the capability of ordinary people for democratic decisions. For the Kemalists, the people were always susceptible to the negative influence of the regressive forces; the Orientalist description of the Oriental people as being ignorant, superstitious, fanatical, and irrational remained an essential part of the Kemalist view towards the people. The Kemalist reforms were meant to transform the people from this backward state and make them proud citizens of the republic; but then, the Kemalists always maintained that the reforms were cut short by the counter-revolution of the regressive forces. Hence, because the transformation of the people from their backward state towards enlightenment was not successfully completed, the Kemalist discourse maintains that the people are not to be trusted. This then forms the basis of the Kemalist guardianship of the regime, and the Kemalist opposition towards a democratic Turkey.

As Bader concludes, Kemalist secularism 'is more and more a threat both to freedom of religion as well as to non-dirigist democracy. ... The Kemalist political and constitutional order did not live up to a minimalist understanding of both of liberal constitutionalism and democratic constitutionalism.'<sup>441</sup> Furthermore, Kemalism does not have any appreciation at all for the necessity of a democratic basis for secularism, often called 'democratic secularism' or 'political secularism.' Secularism then implies 'popular sovereignty' as expressed in the Latin aphorism *Vox Populi Vox Dei*, which must be understood in this respect as 'the voice (or will) of the people must be obeyed as if it is the voice of God.' Kemalist secularism, then, 'as an aggressive, elitist, revolutionary, top-down strategy of "modernizing" Turkey' has been 'incompatible with both

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<sup>441</sup> Bader, Veit (2010) "Constitutionalizing secularism, alternative secularisms or liberal-democratic constitutionalism?," p. 15.

minimal institutional requirements of democratic constitutionalism –*a free and equal political process and multiparty competition.*<sup>442</sup>

### **Kemalist Secularism: A Peculiar Construction**

My detailed analysis of Kemalist secularism in Chapter Three reveals another double discourse at operation in Kemalism with respect to Islam. On the one hand, there is an idealised ‘real’ Islam, which had originally been pure and unadulterated, and which had been in perfect harmony with logic and reason. This ‘real’ Islam that Kemalism advocates is purely a private faith with little or no social dimension. It restricts religion to a matter of conscience, a teaching of morality. Then, there is the actual Islam, which Kemalism approaches from a purely Orientalist perspective and regards as having been corrupted and filled with superstition. Kemalist secularism is an all-out attack against this Islam. Inspired by Reformation, Kemalism seeks to purge hypocrisy, ignorance, bigotry, and beliefs contradicting reason, logic, and modern science.

Some Kemalists even propose the creation of a modern, secular religion, suitable to Kemalist Turkey. The most outspoken proponent of such ideas, Osman Nuri Çerman, takes the final step and includes Kemalism among the fundamental tenets of this secular religion. Symbolised in the trinity, ‘Allah, Muhammad, Atatürk,’ the speeches of Atatürk are to be canonised as part of the holy scripture, alongside Koran and the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad (*hadith*), after the latter two have been subjected to a thorough cleanup of unscientific, irrational elements.

The secularist discourse of Kemalism has led to the emergence of a peculiar situation in contemporary Turkey, whereby the regime restricts the visibility of religion in the public sphere, as well as keeping Islam under tight control. Today, the *Diyanet* branch of the government employs tens of thousands of *imams*. The Friday sermons of these *imams* are centrally dictated; hence one may come across sermons talking about the importance of paying taxes, the benefits of obeying traffic rules, or the necessity of family planning, all in accordance with the regime’s policies. While the salaries of these *imams* are paid from the central budget, it is forbidden to establish mosques outside government control. The Kemalist reform laws banning the Sufi orders and forbidding people to wear traditional clothing in conformity with religious customs are still in force, and in the political arena, even proposing their removal is sufficient grounds for banning a political party.

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<sup>442</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 22-23.

If today, of the original six principles of Kemalism, only secularism has remained as a rallying point for Kemalists, it is because secularism forms the core of the Kemalist discourse. Without secularism, there is no Kemalism, as secularism defines how Kemalism approaches the Turkish people, or the Orient. Likewise, without the imposition of the West-East barrier, which gives rise to the two related signifiers, the West and the East, one cannot speak of Kemalism. Hence, Kemalist secularism becomes the specific form of Orientalism, 'an Orientalism from within,' that gives Kemalism its peculiar identity.

## Bibliography

This is a select bibliography, only including the sources that are cited throughout the thesis text. It is not intended to be a comprehensive bibliography of the subject matter, neither does it cover all the sources I have consulted during the research for the thesis, but ended up not directly citing them.

The bibliography is first divided into two for works in English and Turkish. Then, each section is further divided into 'primary' and 'secondary' sources. This terminology is borrowed from historiography, where 'primary' sources are historical documents that are studied by the author directly, to reveal information about the subject, and the 'secondary' sources are works by contemporary authors, who evaluate the same body of the primary literature and hence their work provide an indirect means to the primary sources. In similar spirit, I have found it useful to make a distinction between the sources authored by the Orientalists and the Kemalists, to uncover their respective discourses, and the sources authored by the scholars studying these discourses in a supposedly objective manner. Hence, the 'primary sources in English' section contains such sources as the newspaper articles, travel accounts, and memoirs.

Nevertheless, such a distinction has its own problems. When the topic under consideration is medieval feudalism, such a distinction is easy to make; the authors of the primary sources are all dead. But Orientalism and Kemalism are discourses that are far from dead, hence it is not a straightforward matter for many sources to decide whether they should be placed under the primary or secondary source category. Furthermore, the distinction also assumes that scholars and academics can completely strip off all subjectivity, and write in an objective, impartial manner. Such a view is not only naive, it also blinds us to see academic writing as a discourse in its own right, with its conventions, implicit assumptions, trendy subjects, biases, personal grudges, and even fads. Still, the authors of the works I have placed under the secondary source category are at least aware that their work should *appear* as objective as possible, and that if they fail to observe the objectiveness criteria, they run the risk of being labelled as 'politically incorrect.'



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